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EVERYDAY AMERICANS

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BY

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PREFACE

This is emphatically not a war book; and yet the chapters that follow, in one sense, are the fruits of the war, inasmuch as they represent reflections upon his own people by one returning to a familiar environment after active contact with English, Scottish, Irish, and French in the turbulent, intimate days of 1918. They are complementary, in a way, to a volume of essays which sprang from that experience and was published in 1919 under the title "Education by Violence." But though representing in its inception the fresher view of familiar America of one returning from abroad, this book in its completed form is tendered as a modest attempt to depict an American type that was sharpened perhaps, but certainly not created by the war. The "old Americans" came to racial consciousness many years ago,

although their sense of nationality has been immeasurably strengthened by the events of the last few years. It is no picture of all America, no survey of our complete social being that I attempt in the following pages; but rather a highly personal study of the typical, the everyday American mind, as it is manifested in the American of the old stock. It is a study of what that typical American product, the college and high school graduate, has become in the generation which must carry on after the war.

New Haven, Connecticut,
June 4, 1920.

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CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN MIND

IN England there developed long ago, perhaps as far back as the days of Shakespeare, who was aristocratic in his tastes and democratic in his sympathies, a curious political animal called the radical-conservative. The radical-conservative, as Lord Fitzmaurice once said, is a man who would have been a radical outright if radicals had not been dissenters; by which he clearly meant that the species agreed with radical principles, but objected to radicals because they did not have good manners, seldom played cricket, and never belonged to the best clubs. Therefore the radical-conservative stays in his own more congenial class while

working for social justice toward all other classes. He is willing to vote with the conservative party in return for concessions in labor laws, inheritance taxes, or the safeguarding of public health.

Thence arises the curious circumstance, most mystifying to foreigners, that a good share of the really progressive legislation in Great Britain of the last half-century has been led by young gentlemen from Oxford and Cambridge who have no more intention of becoming part of the proletariate than of leaving off their collars and going without baths. Bismarck was an out-and-out conservative who for his own nefarious ends furthered what a Rhode Island Republican or an Ulster Tory would call radical measures. But Lord Robert Cecil in our own day is a convinced aristocrat, as befits a son of Lord Salisbury, who is more sincerely effective than many Liberals in various movements which we are accustomed to call reform.

The conservative-liberal is quite a different animal and far commoner, far more familiar to Americans, even if they have never called him by that name. His habitat is America, and thanks to the populousness of this country, he is beginning to have a very important influence outside of his habitat. To define him is difficult, but for purposes of rough classification he may be said to be the man whose native liberal instincts have been crystallized by a combination of interesting circumstances—and sometimes petrified. He is the man who was born a liberal in a liberal country and intends to remain as he was born. He is the man who will fight for the freedom proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence against any later manifestation of the revolutionary spirit. He believes in conserving in unaltered purity the principles of life, government, and industry that his forefathers rightly believed to be liberal. In brief, he is a revolutionary turned policeman, a progressive who stands pat upon

his progress, a conservative-liberal. I believe that he is our closest approximation to a typical American mind.

Whether familiar or not, the effects of this political disease—for it is a disease, a hardening of the arteries of the mind—are easily observable all about us in the America of to-day. Indeed, we see them so frequently that they awaken no surprise, are scarcely seen at all in any intellectual sense of the word. They are like our clear atmosphere, our mixture of races, our hurried steps—things we scarcely notice until an outsider speaks of them. I am not an outsider. I am so much a part of America that I find it difficult to detach myself from a mood that is mine in common with many other Americans. And yet, once one sees it plainly, the educated conservatism of liberal America becomes portentous, a unique political phenomenon.

I think that this peculiarity of our political thinking first became evident to me on an ocean

voyage in war-time. There were a score or so of Americans on board, members, most of them, of various government missions, picked business men, picked professional men, thoroughly intelligent, intensely practical, and entirely American. They were democratic, too, as we use the word in America; that is, good "mixers," free from snobbery, and nothing new in action was alien to their sympathies. They could remold you a business or a legal practice in half an hour's conversation; tear down an organization and build it up again between cigars. Their committee meetings went off like machine-guns, whereas the English officers and trade diplomats, when they got together, snarled themselves in set speeches and motions and took an afternoon to get anywhere. The English, indeed, seemed puzzled and a little dazed by the ease with which the Americans seized upon and put through reorganization of any kind. They seemed positively to leap at change, so long as basic ideas were not

involved. "Nothing," said an Indian colonel, "is sacred to them. They would scrap the empire and build a new one—on paper—at sixty miles an hour."

He was quite wrong. The system my countrymen lived by permitted change, urged change, up to a certain point. They would demolish a ten-story building to erect one of twenty or scrap thousands of machines in order to adopt a better process, but when it came to principles and institutions they were conservative. The founders of their social and political order had been almost a century ahead of the times. The instruments of life and of government they had provided had served with slight modifications for the free-moving America of the nineteenth century. It had been a game for Americans, and a splendid one, to realize the liberality and democracy possible under the Constitution, to work out the independence available for the common man in a rich and undeveloped country in which his

political power guaranteed him every advantage that could be gained in a capitalistic system, including the acquisition of capital. It had been a splendid game, and our wits had been sharpened, our faculties strengthened, our prosperity fortified, our self-confidence enormously increased in playing it. Given our rules, we could play the game more resourcefully than any other people on earth. And they were wise rules, which provided for growth, but not for a different kind of contest. We were so sure that America stood for freedom, independence, and liberality in general that we could not take seriously people who did not believe in democracy, nor conceive that there might be an idea of democracy different from our own.

Indeed, on board that ship, a curious experience came to all of us, Englishmen, Americans, and I, the humble observer, when in the course of argument or conference the theories of life upon which we were variously living

came momentarily into view. The Americans, it was clear, were certain that they were the most progressive people in the world. This certainty was like the fixed dogma of a Roman Catholic; it gave them elasticity and daring. Being sure of their principles, so sure as to be almost unaware of them, they ignored precedents, and solved or dismissed problems with equal ease. They made plans for a league of nations, they approved of a temporary autocracy for the President, they put the labor question on a business basis, and so disposed of it; they were afraid of nothing but a failure to act and act quickly. Nevertheless, as they talked and worked with the English, it became increasingly evident that their road ended in a wall.

There were walls on the English road, too—walls of caste thinking and social privilege that seemed as ridiculous as a moat around an office building. Our wall was invisible to most of us, and as a body we never tried to pass it

at all. It was the end wall of our liberal ideas, beyond which, if we thought of it at all, presumably lay socialism, anarchy, chaos.

Just that far the American mind, like some light tank, ran, surmounting everything, taking to the fields if the road was blocked, turning, backing, doing everything but stop; only to halt dead at the invisible barrier, and zigzag away again. By such a free-moving process within the limits of law we had scrambled across a continent in turbulent, individualistic exploitation, and yet had built a sound political system carefully and well. And there we had stopped, convinced that we had solved the problem of democracy and equal opportunity for all. This explains why America is twenty years behind the best of Europe in social and economic reform. (To be sure, Europe needed reform more than we did). This is what it is to be a conservative-liberal.

The Englishman is different. He is much more likely to be an obstinate Tory, blocking

all advance, and living, as far as he is able, by a system as antiquated as feudalism; or if not a Tory, then an out-and-out radical eager for a legal revolution. But in either case he knows what different-minded men are thinking; and if there is a wall on his road, he looks over it. If he is a Tory, he understands radicalism and fights it because he prefers an inequality that favors him to a more logical system that might be personally disagreeable. If he is a radical, he understands Toryism. But the American conservative-liberal acknowledges no opinion except his own. He insists, in the words of a contemporary statesman, that the American system, as founded by our forefathers, is the best in the world, and he is not interested in others. There are a thousand proofs that it is not the best possible system even for America, and plenty of them are in print—proofs advanced by capitalists as well as labor leaders, by Catholics as well as socialists; but they do not trouble him, because he

neither hears nor reads them. It is easier to call the writer a crank or a Bolshevik.

This is the liberal-conservative mind that will not look beyond its own fixed principles and refuses to understand those who differ from it; that suffers a kind of paralysis when confronted by genuine radicalism. The American college undergraduate has it to perfection. Bubbling over with energy, ready for anything in the practical world of struggle or adventure, he is as confident and as careful of the ideas he has inherited as a girl of her reputation. He is armored against new thinking. The American business man fairly professes it. He speculates in material things with an abandon that makes a Frenchman pale; but new principles in the relations of trade to general welfare, questions of unearned increment, first bore and then, if pressed home, frighten him.

And yet the college undergraduates, after hatching, and the American business man have made for us a very comfortable America, just

now the safest place in the world to live in, the most prosperous country in the world, the most cheerful. The liberal-conservative way of doing things has its great advantages. America is its product, and the ranter who describes the United States as the home of supercapitalism, a sink of cheaply exploited labor, a dull stretch of bourgeois mediocrity, does not seem to be able to persuade even himself that the United States is not the best of all countries for a permanent residence.

And the great Americans of the past have nearly all been conservative-liberals. Washington was a great republican; he was also essentially an aristocrat in social and economic relations, who kept slaves and did not believe in universal suffrage. Lincoln, politically, was the greatest of English-speaking democrats, but he let the privileged classes exploit the working-man and the soldier, partly in order to win the war, chiefly because problems of wages and unearned increments and economic priv-

ilege generally did not enter into his scheme of democracy. Roosevelt fought a good fight for the square deal in public and private life, but hesitated and at last turned back when it became evident that a deal that was completely square meant the overturning of social life as he knew and loved it in America.

And these men we feel were right. Their duty was to make possible a good government and a stable society, and they worked not with theories only, but also with facts as they were. The Germans have argued that the first duty of the state is self-preservation, and that rights of individual men and other states may properly be crushed in order to preserve it. We have crushed the Germans and, one hopes, their philosophy. But no one doubts that it is a duty of society to preserve itself. No one believes that universal suffrage for all, negroes included, would have been advisable in Washington's day, when republicanism was still an experiment. No one believes, I fancy, that the mini-

mum wage, the inheritance tax, and coöperative management should have had first place, or indeed any place, in the mind of the Lincoln of 1863. Few suppose that Roosevelt as a socialist would have been as useful to the United States as Roosevelt the Progressive with a back-throw toward the ideals of the aristocratic state; as Roosevelt the conservative-liberal.

But too great reliance on even a great tradition has its disadvantages. I know an American preparatory school that for many college generations has entered its students at a famous university with the highest of examination records, and a reputation for courtesy and cleanness of mind and soundness of body scarcely paralleled elsewhere. I have watched these boys with much interest, and I have seen them in surprising numbers gradually decline from their position of superiority as they faced the rapid changes of college life, as they settled into a new environment with differ-

ent demands and more complex standards. They leaned too heavily upon their admirable schooling; they were too confident of the strength and worth of their tradition; they looked backward instead of forward, and stood still while less favored men went on. Their fault was the fault of American liberalism, which stands pat with Washington and Roosevelt and Lincoln.

Perhaps the greatest teacher in nineteenth-century American universities was William Graham Sumner. In his day he was called a radical, and unsuccessful efforts were made to oust him from his professorship because of his advocacy of free trade. Now I hear him cited as a conservative by those who quote his support of individualism against socialism, his distrust of coöperation against the league of nations. His friends forget that an honest radical in one age would be an honest radical in another; and that the facts available having changed, it is certain that his opinions

would change also, although just what he would advocate, just how decide, we cannot certainly know. Is it probable that Dante, the great advocate of imperial control in a particularistic medieval world, would have been a pro-German in 1914? The American liberal who proclaims himself of the party of Lincoln, and is content with that definition, might have an unpleasant shock if that great reader of the heart of the common man could resume his short-cut life.

Indeed, an inherited liberalism has the same disadvantages as inherited money: all the owner has to do is to learn how to keep it; in other words, to become a conservative. That is what is going on in America. While we were pioneers in liberty and individualism, wealth and opportunity and independence were showered upon us, and although wealth for the average man is harder to come by, and opportunity is more and more limited to the fortunate, and independence belongs only to good incomes, nevertheless the conservative-liberal

keeps the pioneer's optimism, and is satisfied to take ready-made a system that his ancestors wrought by painful and open-minded experiment. In practice he is still full of initiative and invention; in principle he can conceive of only one dispensation, the ideas of political democracy which were the radicalism of 1861 and 1840 and 1789 and 1776.

Suppose that he could conceive of industrial democracy, of a system where every man began with an equal share of worldly privilege as he begins now with an equal share of worldly rights. Would he not work it out, with his still keen practicality, and test its value precisely as he tests a new factory method or an advertising scheme? But he cannot conceive of it. It lies beyond his dispensation. His liberalism turns conservative at the thought. It was different with political democracy and with religious toleration. The first cannot even now be said to be precisely a perfect system, and the second has left us per-

ilously near to having no religion at all. Nevertheless, the liberal ancestor of our American never doubted that they were *his* problems, to be worked out to some solution. He followed boldly where they led.

What has happened to the political and economic thinking of many an American much resembles what has happened to his religion. He learns at church a number of ethical principles which would make him very uneasy if put into practice. He learns the virtue of poverty, the duty of self-sacrifice, the necessity of love for his fellow-man. Now, saintly poverty has not become an ideal in America—certainly not in New York or Iowa or Atlantic City—nor is self-sacrifice common among corporations, or love a familiar attribute of the practice of law. Does the American therefore eschew the ethics of Christianity? On the contrary. Religion is accepted at its traditional value. The church grows richer and more influential—within limits. The plain

man keeps all his respects for religion as an ideal; but he regards it precisely as an ideal, a formula beautiful in its perfection, not to be sullied by too close an application, not to be worked out into new terms to fit a new life.

And that is just what the conservative-liberal does with the vigorous liberalism of his forefathers. He buries it in his garden, and expects to dig it up after many days, a bond with coupons attached. He has accepted it as the irrevocable word of Jehovah establishing the metes and bounds wherein he shall think. It is his creed; and like the creeds of the church, the further one gets from its origins, the greater the repugnance to change. He stands by the declaration of his forefathers; stands pat, and begs to be relieved of further abstract discussion. Business is pressing; controversy is bad for business; ideas are bad for business; change is bad for business: let well enough alone.

But by all odds the most important fact as

regards this conservative-liberal mind of which I have been writing remains to be stated, and that is its success, for it is now the prevailing mind in America. As our soldiers in France, though bearing Italian names, Irish names, Hebrew, Polish, German names, yet in helmet and uniform looked all, or nearly all, like the physical type we call American, so in this confusing country of ours, immigrant-settled, polylingual, built upon fragments of the empires of England and Spain and Russia and France, there is indubitably a mental type which we may call with some confidence American, a mind liberal in its principles, but in its instincts conservative.

Indeed it is arguable and perhaps demonstrable that this American mental type is the most definite national entity to be found anywhere in the Western world. I know that this sounds paradoxical. We have heard much for several years now of the lack of homogeneity in America. We felt in 1914 our

German-Americans cleave away from us (to be sure, they came back); we saw in 1918 and 1919 the radical socialist and the I. W. W. and the vehement intellectual manifest symptoms that were certainly not American as the 'nineties knew America. We began to realize that the immigrant changes his language more quickly than his *mores,* and frequently changes neither. All this is true. And yet, in spite of it, this conservative-liberal way of looking at things which we know so well in America comes nearer to being a definite national psychology that acts in expected fashions, has qualities that you can describe as I have been describing them, and characteristics common to all varieties of it, than either the "British mind" or the "French mind" of which we write glibly.

For the British mind includes the Irish, which is as different from the English as a broncho from a dray-horse. It includes the Tory mind and the Liberal mind, which in

England are as dissimilar as were Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln. It includes, if we use it loosely, Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Asquith and H. G. Wells, each of whom represents a considerable British constituency. And they could no more think alike on any topic on the earth below or the heavens above than a Turk, a Greek, and a Jew. Certain fundamental attitudes would unite all three of these latter if they were civilized: they would all eat with knives and forks. And in the same fashion certain definite racial traits unite the Britons aforementioned. But the differences imposed by social caste or diverging political and social philosophies are far greater than anything to be found in everyday America, which latter I define as lying between the fringe of recent immigrants on the one hand and the excrescences of Boston intellectual aristocrats or New York radical intellectuals on the other.

Is there a "French mind"? Intellectually

and esthetically, perhaps yes. Politically and socially, to a less degree of uniformity than can be found in America. From the simple homogeneity of France, as we casuals see it, has crystallized out the aristocracy and much of the church, whose respective parties differ not merely as regards the policy of the Government, but are still opposed to that Government itself.

The United States, far more heterogeneous in race, far less fixed in national character, threatened by its masses of aliens, who are in every sense unabsorbed, is yet much more homogeneous in its thinking. In America weekly magazines for men and women spread everywhere and through every class but the lowest, and so does this conservative-liberalism in politics and social life which I have tried to define. In Connecticut and Kansas and Arizona it is displayed in every conversation, as our best known national weekly (itself conservative-liberal) is displayed on every news-

stand. Irrespective of racial or financial differences, everywhere in America, between the boundaries I have already indicated—the alien immigrant on one hand, the advanced intellectual on the other—nine out of ten of us are conservative-liberals; everywhere, indeed, throughout the American bourgeoisie, which with us includes skilled laborer and farmer, professional man and millionaire.

And the mental habits of this contemporary American are of more than local importance. We who are just now so afraid of internationalism are more likely than any other single agency to bring it about. Our habits of travel, our traverse of class lines, our American way of doing things, are perhaps the nearest approximation of what the world seems likely to adopt as a modern habit if the old aristocracies break down everywhere, if easy transportation becomes general, if there is widespread education, if Bolshevism does not first turn our whole Western system upside down. Already

in newspapers and books, in theaters and politics, in social intercourse and in forms of music and language, one sees all through Western Europe (and, they say, also in the East) the American mode creeping in, to be welcomed or cursed according to circumstances. And those great international levelers, the movies, are American in plot and scene and idea and manners from one end to the other of a film that stretches round the world.

Thus the American mind is worth troubling about; and if politically, socially, economically the spirit that we and the foreigners call American has become stagnant in its liberalism, it is time to awake. In liberalism inheres our vitality, our initiative, our strength. Its stagnation, its inertia, its blindness to the new waves of freedom sweeping upward from the masses and on in broken and muddy torrents through the world are poignant dangers. We must open eyes; we must change our ground; we must fight the evil in the new revolution, but

welcome the good. Our own revolution lies before the deluge; it is no longer enough to go on; it is not now the sufficing document of a political philosophy. We must not stop with Washington and Lincoln. We must go on where the conservative Washington and the radical Lincoln would lead if they were our contemporaries. Radical-conservatism is good, and Toryism or radicalism have their uses; but conservative-liberalism, preserved, desiccated, museum liberalism, long continued in, is death to the minds that maintain it.

CHAPTER II

CONSERVATIVE AMERICA

THERE is one experience that conservative-liberal America—bourgeois America, the pushing America that gets what it wants on this side of the ocean—possesses in common, and that is its education. We of the vast American middle class have all been to high school, or we have lived with high school graduates; we have all been to college, or we have worked with college graduates. Our education, when viewed with any detachment, is astoundingly homogeneous. In a given generation most of us have studied the same textbooks in mathematics and geography and history, read the same selections in literature, been inoculated with the same ethical principles from the Bible and the moralists. Ask us a

question as to what makes right or wrong, as the President did in his war messages, and we will respond with a universal roar, like factory whistles when a button is punched on some celebration day.

This general American experience is largely responsible for the tenacity with which we of this generation blindly conserve the liberal principles of our ancestors, even while we keep them, like the tables of the ten commandments, safe from the rude touch of practical experience. Education such as ours seldom fails to influence men's ways of thinking even when their actions pass beyond its control. The influence, however, is too often ineffectual, bloodless. That is a lesson we need to ponder in America.

Education in these colonies in the eighteenth century was bent toward theology. All but the lower schools, if, indeed, they could be excepted, were contrived to find and to train the pastor, the minister to the people. For him

those studies that influence opinion—history, ethics—were chiefly taught. For his purposes, the languages of the classics were chiefly studied. It was the pastor that emerged as prime product of academies and colleges. And therefore theology, that arduous intellectual exercise for which he prepared, set its mark upon all intellects down to the humblest. We wonder at the obsession with religious thinking that the letters and diaries of farmers, merchants, and lawyers of our eighteenth century display to the amazement of their very untheological descendants. We should rather wonder at the intellectual energy expended in wrestling with a difficult and abstract subject. They entered, as we of the twentieth-century bourgeois do not, into the field of scholarship; they partook of disputes that were as international as Christendom; and shared with the chosen ones for whom all this education was made, Jonathan Edwards and his co-professionals, an interest in problems far broader

than their strip of Atlantic clearings. That the experience, whatever we may think of the value of the theology, was good for them does not, I think, permit of argument. There have never been abler Americans than at the end of the eighteenth century.

But nineteenth-century America was a different world. Interest in theology abated for reasons that need not here be discussed. More and more the United States diverged intellectually from our colonial unity with Europe; our own problems engrossed us; and these were problems of material development, of local statecraft, of that elementary education which a democracy must necessarily take as its chief concern. What had been a professional training by which God's ministers were to be selected became relatively unprofessional, a so-called "liberal education," the object of which was to illumine and make pliable and broad the minds of laymen. The high purpose of the teacher was not now to choose the leaders of

the spirit. It was rather to preserve in a new world of crude physical endeavor the arts and sciences that civilize the mind.

American life in the nineteenth century had many of the characteristics that we are accustomed to associate with heroic barbarism. It had the same insecurity—insecurity of life on the border, insecurity of fortune where life was safe. It had the same frequency of hazardous toil against wild nature; the same accompaniments of cold and privation; the same vast and shadowy enterprises, usually collapsing; the same intensity of physical sensation; the same ardor of emotional experience in the spiritual realm. And always education mitigated extravagance, restrained excess, directed effort. Through education our ancestral Europe restrained and guided us. Education kept us white.

But never, perhaps, has the divergence between life as it had to be lived and the civilities taught us in school been greater. Never has

the ideal world, which, after all, it is the chief business of education to mirror, been more different from the facts of experience than in America. The ridiculous scientist of Cooper's "Prairie" who mistakes his donkey for a new monster and thinks it more important to call the buffalo the bison than to eat when hungry of its hump, is a symbol of the contrast between what we learned and what we did in America. In the eighteenth century, education for most Americans was practical preparation for a knowledge of God's ways with man. In the nineteenth it had become not a preparation for life so much as an antiseptic against the demoralizations of a purely material struggle to open up a continent. The results have been of grave political importance.

For the divergence between theory and practice explains the curiously traditional character of our schooling as we knew it in youth, as our grandfathers knew it in youth. I am not now speaking of the wearisome controversies over

Latin and Greek and classic English literature, the so-called traditional subjects which make up a large part of education. It is not the letter, but the spirit, that makes the thing taught traditional. And ever since democracy began, the teacher has had to be the priest and guardian of tradition in America. He has been an anxious parent stretching the coverlet of racial culture over the restless limbs of little immigrants. He has taught reading, writing, and arithmetic as a means of holding fast to our tradition. He has taught literature and history and "moral ethics" and "natural science" as the containers of that tradition. We have almost forgotten that for a time in the early nineteenth century it seemed quite possible that the frontier would become Indian rather than European in its culture. We see clearly now how possible it would have been for whole regions of the South to relapse into negro semi-barbarism. We may guess that save for the teacher and his grinding in of tradition the

white races of North America might have slipped backward, as too clearly have the white races in many parts of Latin America.

One element in this education by tradition was specially important. Liberalism, the principle upon which this republic was founded, education took up as soon as it dropped theology, if not earlier. American education became impregnated with liberalism, made liberalism its chief tradition. What we study in school and college stays by us, overlaid perhaps, scarcely vital any more, yet packed close to the roots of our conscious being. And the compost they gave us in America was liberalism. History enshrined the republican ideals of our founders and the democratic ideals of our nineteenth-century development. Sometimes it was taught in college classes with "sources" duly ticketed. Sometimes it trickled through commencement speeches or primers thumbed on back-row benches. The results were the same. In literature, whether English or

American, the same ideas were predominant, or at least were made to seem so by careful selection. Democracy and the rights of man blow through the reading of the American school-boy, somewhat aridly it must be admitted; but still they blow. Civics and government and the social sciences in these latter days, as they are taught in America, advance the same standard.

Not less definite and persuasive was the influence of the men who taught us. Many of them have been aristocratic in taste and in their misprision of the stupidities of the common man, but their text also was of liberalism and democracy whenever the subject or the occasion permitted. Even geography and spelling were presented as the means whereby the child of the laboring man had been given his chance to rise in the world and perhaps become President. Properly considered, the things we have been taught, the men who taught us, the very organization of our school and college system, have

been one vast engine for shaping the minds of young America in the turn and mold of liberalism.

But this liberalism, like most of our education, was highly traditional. Our subjects and the men who taught them looked prevailingly backward for inspiration, recalled us to the past, warned us of the future. The urge was always the old Roman one—preserve the piety of your ancestors. Preparation for new conditions, for a possible new liberty in industry or politics, for a possible new democracy in wealth, there was, we must confess, very little. We were linked to tradition; we were made profoundly and sincerely liberal, at least in our theories of life; we were implored to stand pat.

And though education, as the art was practised here in America, has perhaps kept us liberal, it has certainly given to liberalism that faint shadow of unreality, that sacrosanctity which belongs to all traditional beliefs. It is the traditional quality of American education

that more than any other single agency has petrified American liberalism.

We plain Americans in our little red schoolhouses and our big brick high schools and our spreading universities have learned republicanism and the rights of man and the not-to-be-questioned opportunity of every person to go to the top of the ladder if he wished and were able. This we were taught explicitly and implicitly. And we believed these things because we were made to think that all right-thinking men everywhere believed them; and therefore we recited Gladstone and Lincoln and Toussaint L'Ouverture and passages from Carlyle's "French Revolution" and Mrs. Browning on the freeing of Italy with confident hearts. Furthermore, we felt that these principles were sincere, because, no matter how poor or how stupid, we found educational opportunities opened on every side. There was no discrimination in the quantity of American education, and but little in its quality. Until we left the

school or the campus, our liberal tradition fitted us like a garment. It never occurred to us that it might not always fit.

Yet as soon as we moved out into America, crossing that bridge from theory to practice, from ideas to application, which in all countries is long and in new countries longest of all, strange contradiction began to be apparent. Republicanism, it appeared, worked out in practice, at least in our town, into boss control and domination by party leaders, acting usually for vested interests. The rights of man, we discovered, had a curious sound when discussed by labor-unions or the unemployed. Opportunities, it became clear, could not be freely offered to the man without capital unless we were prepared to change radically an industrial system which our common sense taught us was better—at least for us—than the visionary industrial democracies that radicals without business experience wished to set up. Were these precious ideals of ours merely bun-

combe, then, held only in theory, in practice to be disregarded? Or was democracy good as a half-way measure, but false as a general principle? Was our education a tradition to be reverenced—and disregarded?

Not a few reached the indicated conclusion, though they kept, as a rule, their opinions to themselves. Perhaps as many swung to the other extreme, believed that only more democracy would cure us, and also kept out of print, for fear of being associated with radical aliens who held much the same opinions in politics and social affairs, but very different conceptions of cleanliness, morals, and polite conversation. These were our right and left wings merely. The great mass of us, the everyday Americans, took things as they were with a kind of shrewd childish good sense, and pushed ahead, being as democratic as was convenient in this unequal world, but taking no nonsense from people who would interfere with business in order to make us more so. And that is where

we are now—at the end of the war, in the midst of a world revolution so great that no one knows whether it has just begun or is just ending.

But a revolution drives men back upon their principles, makes them scan willingly or unwillingly the things they live by—the prejudices, enlightenments, interpretations, convictions that in the largest sense *are* their education. And this is true not only of rapid revolutions, like the French and the Russian, but of slow ones, such as that revolution which has been slowly gathering headway in English-speaking countries for three decades or more, that revolution of social and industrial conditions now rapidly accelerating. And what have Americans thought of their education?

I think they have found it a brake, a stabilizer, a deterrent alike from violent reaction and dangerous experiment. I think also that they have found it what it is—traditional. They have felt it as a taboo, good on Sundays, but on

week-days not to be too closely regarded. Where it has preached restraint to the more radical, they have listened, but grown restless. Was it not John Bright who said that England would be ruined if the hours for labor should be shortened? Did not Cooper, who wrote the epic of frontier freedom, sharpen his pen to defend the unearned increment of the landlord? Where it speaks of liberty and equality to the more conservative, they have listened, but not taken it too seriously. After all, the world must be governed and dividends paid. While the rights of the citizen should be safeguarded, business is business nevertheless, and politics politics. The Declaration of Independence, they felt, should be kept in its place, which was the Fourth of July. Theory—by which they meant education—has little place in practical affairs. They were liberals of course, but plain and prosperous Americans first of all, and the latter, at least, they intended to remain.

And thus, in its noble attempt to shape the

minds of Americans to a similitude of their full-blooded ancestors who dared to be radical, American education itself has acquired the sanctity, the reverence, the ghostliness of the dead. Like the dead, it is most influential upon spirits sensitive to the past, and operates through love and veneration and mere habit rather than through immediate compulsion. Like them, it visits the minds of the living only in glimpses of the moon, and its influence, though wide-spread, is partial and easily forgotten in the noonday glare of active, practical life. Americans respect their education, but too seldom do they live by it.

It is a good tradition, this American ideal of noble and sturdy liberalism. The only detraction to be made is precisely that the education which embodies it is felt to be merely traditional. But this is much the same as to say that last year's hat is a good hat, the only trouble being that when we wear it we invariably remember that it is last year's hat. And

at least one unhappy consequence follows.

American minds have been coddled in school and college for at least a generation. There are two kinds of mental coddling. The first belongs to the public schools, and is one of the defects of our educational system that we abuse privately and largely keep out of print. It is democratic coddling. I mean, of course, the failure to hold up standards, the willingness to let youth wobble upward, knowing little and that inaccurately, passing nothing well, graduating with an education that hits and misses like an old type-writer with a torn ribbon. America is full of "sloppy thinking," of inaccuracy, of half-baked misinformation, of sentimentalism, especially sentimentalism, as a result of coddling by schools that cater to an easy-going democracy. Only fifty-six per cent of a group of girls, graduates of the public schools, whose records I once examined, could do simple addition, only twenty-nine per cent simple multiplication correctly; a de-

plorable percentage had a very inaccurate knowledge of elementary American geography.

A dozen causes are responsible for this condition, and among them, I suspect, one, which if not major, at least deserves careful pondering. The teacher and the taught have somehow drifted apart. His function in the large has been to teach an ideal, a tradition. He is content, he has to be content, with partial results. It is not for life as it is, it is for what life ought to be, that he is preparing even in arithmetic; he has allowed the faint unreality of a priestcraft to numb him. In the mind of the student a dim conception has entered, that this education—all education—is a garment merely, to be doffed for the struggle with realities. The will is dulled. Interest slackens.

But it is in aristocratic coddling that the effects of our educational attitude gleam out to the least observant understanding. This is the coddling of the preparatory schools and the colleges, and it is more serious for it is a defect

that cannot be explained away by the hundred difficulties that beset good teaching in a public-school system, nation-wide, and conducted for the young of every race in the American menagerie. The teaching in the best American preparatory schools and colleges is as careful and as conscientious as any in the world. That one gladly asserts. Indeed, an American boy in a good boarding-school is handled like a rare microbe in a research laboratory. He is ticketed; every instant of his time is planned and scrutinized; he is dieted with brain food, predigested, and weighed before application. I sometimes wonder if a moron could not be made into an Abraham Lincoln by such a system—if the system were sound.

It is not sound. The boys and girls, especially the boys, are coddled for entrance examinations, coddled through freshman year, coddled oftentimes for graduation. And they too frequently go out into the world fireproof against anything but intellectual coddling.

Such men and women can read only writing especially prepared for brains that will take only selected ideas, simply put. They can think only on simple lines, not too far extended. They can live happily only in a life where ideas never exceed the college sixty per cent of complexity, and where no intellectual or esthetic experience lies too far outside the range of their curriculum. A world where one reads the news and skips the editorials; goes to musical comedies, but omits the plays; looks at illustrated magazines, but seldom at books; talks business, sports, and politics, but never economics, social welfare, and statesmanship—that is the world for which we coddle the best of our youth. Many indeed escape the evil effects by their own innate originality; more bear the marks to the grave.

The process is simple, and one can see it in the English public schools (where it is being attacked vivaciously) quite as commonly as here. You take your boy out of his family and his

world. You isolate him except for companionship with other nursery transplantings and teachers themselves isolated. And then you feed him, nay, you cram him, with good traditional education, filling up the odd hours with the excellent, but negative, passion of sport. Then you subject him to a special cramming and send him to college, where sometimes he breaks through the net of convention woven about him, and sees the real world as it should appear to the student before he becomes part of it; but more frequently wraps himself deep and more deeply in conventional opinion, conventional practice, until, the limbs of his intellect bound tightly, he stumbles into the outer world.

And there, in the swirl and the vivid practicalities of American life, is the net loosened? I think not. I think rather that the youth learns to swim clumsily despite his encumbrances of lethargic thinking and tangled idealism. But if they are cut? If he goes on the

sharp rocks of experience, finds that hardness, shrewdness, selfish individualism pay best in American life, what has he in his spirit to meet this disillusion? Of what use has been his education in the liberal, idealistic traditions of America? Of some use, undoubtedly, for habit, even a dull habit, is strong; but whether useful enough, whether powerful enough, to save America, to keep us "white" in the newer and more colloquial sense, the future will test and test quickly.

Why do we coddle our aristocracy, who can pay for the best and most effective education? I think that the explanation again is to be sought in the traditionalism of American education. If our chief, our ultimate, duty to the boy that we teach is to make him an "American gentleman," and if by this is meant that we are to instil the essence of the Americanism which made Washington and Lincoln and Roosevelt, and let it go at that, and if all our education hovers about this central purpose—why, the

stage is set for a problem play that may become tragedy or farce. It is not thinking we teach then so much as what has been taught. It is not life, but what has been lived; not American liberalism, but a conservatism that never has been characteristically American. The tradition is not at fault, nor the thought of the past, nor the lives of our ancestors; it is when all these things are taught as dead idealism unrelated to the facts of the present that they become merely traditional.

And the boy and girl are not deceived. They take all that is given them—no youth in the world are so pliable, so receptive as ours—and retain and respect and cherish what they remember of it. But it is clear that for them it is tradition, it is unreal in comparison with their sports, their social aspirations. It will be unreal in comparison with their business and their politics and their household affairs. It will be a venerated tradition of liberal thinking for them of which they will be highly con-

servative. But it will not function in their lives—not more at least than the sixty per cent that they sought for in order to get that degree of bachelor of arts which certified that they were versed in the thought of their forefathers. And so they merge in the common American mind that I have called conservative-liberal.

I know of no better proof of the truth of what I have just written than the history of our college undergraduates in war-time.

Here is such a demonstration as comes only once in a generation. Of all unpreparedness, the unpreparedness of the undergraduate for war was apparently chief. He knew little about the war, its causes, its manifestations, for he is not an ardent reader of current events outside his college world, nor does he hear much of the talk of the market-place. He knew little about war. The R. O. T. C. had spread some ideas of drill and discipline and the technic of fighting; but he was neither drilled nor disciplined in 1917. And as for

the training in accurate obedience and in exact thinking which war is supposed to demand, he simply did not have it, or so we thought. Nor had his particularistic fashion of following his own little contests to the exclusion of loyalties to the world outside, and his indifference to politics beyond fraternity elections, or economics beyond the cost of theater-tickets and beer, led us to assume a ready response to a great moral emergency in national affairs.

We were utterly deceived. The response of the American undergraduate was immediate and magnificent. He crowded into the most dangerous military professions, and was eminent in the most difficult branches of organization and experiment. He did not, it is true, think very broadly about the war, but he thought intensely. He did not learn accuracy, steadiness, independence overnight, but he learned them. He was wholly admirable. And the women, who in ways not yet sufficiently celebrated made it possible for the

country to stiffen to the crisis, were as eager to serve as the men.

And the reason, I believe, was that for the time the education of the undergraduate ceased being traditional and became a moving force in his experience. The dim liberal idealism in which his mind had been moving for many years suddenly took on color and became fire. Every impulse of his mental training urged him to do just what was asked of him, to struggle for democracy, for justice, for a square deal; to believe in the rights of man and the permanence of right and the supremacy of a righteous idealism. And his habits of hard, earnest play, where rules were obeyed and victory went to the best player, also were the very stuff the world wanted, also transformed miraculously into the very apparatus of war. His traditional education, with its extra-curriculum of games that also were traditional in their neglect of the new and special qualities required for success in modern life, precisely

fitted the clamorous need of the hour. And the undergraduate for a little while silenced his critics, amazed his friends, and was in many respects happier than in those years of peace when he was trying to bridge the gap between his education and life as it was being lived in America.

And with peace he relapses—the American in general relapses into the old discontinuity. The crisis of self-defense over, our ideals once more begin to seem impractical, traditionary. As long as the patriotism lit by the war and danger crackled under the pot, our liberalism bubbled ardently; but peace chills the brew. For peace means that we drop our ardors and face again the insistent reachings of the democracy for a greater share in wealth, for a greater control over productivity, for representation in industry as well as in politics. Peace means that we must face not war, with its romantic thrills and its common enemy, but the prosaic causes of war that hide among friends as well

as enemies, that for cure demand self-criticism, self-denial, and humbleness of spirit, a struggle in which the Croix de Guerre is likely to be reproach and contumely.

The break between our education and the life we are living again widens, and it is this break which emasculates our liberalism. Viewed alone, the fine ideals of our education are easily defensible; the hustling vigor of our life is also defensible. The trouble is that in ordinary times they fail somehow or another to connect. Education grows bloodless. Life becomes aimless or merely self-regarding. What we believe grows pallid and fades before it transmutes into what we do. Indeed, I would go further and say that Americans, and especially the graduates of universities, are somewhat weakened by their education. They go out into life with an enormous appetite for living and a set of ideals like a row of preserved vegetables canned and hermetically sealed for future contingencies. In 1917 and 1918 we

opened some of those jars and found the contents good for a special emergency. But ordinarily the lids are tight, while we go about our business proud of our stores of education, but inwardly uncertain, like the housewife, as to whether or not those ideas that seemed so good when our teachers packed them away in the season of youth will not be sour to the taste of practical modernity.

The clamor for vocational education is a protest against this ineffectiveness of the merely traditional. But the cure does not lie in such a medicining. Vocational education is well enough, and we need more of it, but training of the hands and of the brain to purely material accomplishments will never save liberalism in America. The strength of vocational education is that it looks forward and prepares for things as they are. Its weakness, when administered alone, is that it neglects the directing mind. In any large sense it is aimless, or, rather, it aims at successful slavery quite as

much as at successful freedom. Liberal education also must look forward, must put its traditions to work, must germinate, and become alive in the mind of the American, and then teach him by old principles to attack new problems.

We must either live by our education or live without it. The alternatives are desiccation and anarchy. If we live by it, education itself stays alive, grows, sloughs off dead matter, adapts itself like an organism to environment. If we live without and beyond and in neglect of education, as many "practical" Americans have always done once they left school or college, education decays, and sooner or later the man decivilizes, drifts toward that mere acceleration of busyness, which is the modern equivalent of barbarism.

Once before, and far more seriously, a civilization was threatened because its education became merely traditional and ceased to function

in practical life. The society of Appolinaris Sidonius in the fifth century, as Dill describes it, was faced with economic disruption, with hordes of aliens, with a rampant individualism that put the acquisition of a secure fortune above everything else. The leaders failed to lead. "Their academic training only deepened and intensified the deadening conservatism of unassailable wealth." "Faith in Rome had killed all faith in a wider future for humanity . . . ." There was an "apparent inability to imagine, even in the presence of tremendous forces of disruption, that society should ever cease to move along the ancient lines." Roman imperialism divorced itself from Roman thought and became a deadening tyranny. Roman thought divorced itself from Roman life and became an empty philosophy. And the sixth century and disaster followed.

The historical analogy is imperfect. Our civilization is still vigorous where the Roman

was tired and weak. No outer barbarians threaten us. Science safeguards us from economic breakdown.

And yet, like the skeptic who does not believe in God, but refuses to take chances on his death-bed, I should not scoff at the parallel. Stale imperialism, shaken religions, a liberalism become an article of faith not an instrument of practice—all these are potential of decay, of explosion. We must look to our education. If it does not grip our life, we must change education. If life is not gripped, our life needs reforming. And the thing is so extraordinarily difficult that it is high time we ceased praising for a while the virtues of our forefathers or the wealth of our compatriots, and began the task. After all, it means no more than to teach the next generation not merely to preserve, but also to carry on, the traditions of America.

CHAPTER III

RADICAL AMERICA

IT is with no intention to be paradoxical that I call America a radical nation. I know well by experience, sometimes galling, what an English labor leader or a French socialist thinks of America, as he understands it. A mere congestion of capital, a spawning-ground of the bourgeoisie, the birthplace of trusts, where even the labor-unions are capitalistic. If the world is to be saved for democracy, he says, it will not be by America.

I am not so sure. Being one of those who doubted whether the successful termination of the war would forever make safe democratic ideals, I feel at liberty to doubt whether the triumph of a European proletariate will give us

what we want. It depends much upon what one means by democracy. And correspondingly, whether America is fundamentally radical or conservative depends much upon what one means by radicalism. If, like Louis XIV or Napoleon, I had a leash of writers and scholars at my command, I would have them produce nothing but definitions while these critical years of transition lasted. I would make them into an academy whose fiat in general definition would be as valid as the French Academy's in the meaning of a word. I would make it a legal offense for two men to quarrel over socialism when one means communism and the other state control of the post-office. I would, like the early Quakers, require arbitration for all disputants, especially in politics, knowing that a clear head would quickly discover that arguers on democracy conceivably meant anything from a standard collar for every one to nationalization of women. But the good old days of literary dictatorship are

past. The most a writer upon the mind of the everyday American can do is to endeavor honestly to make his own definitions as he goes; and I believe that American radicalism needs a good deal of defining.

It is not the doctrines of Babeuf or Marx or Lenine that have made what seems to be the indigenous variety of American radicalism. Their beliefs, and especially those of Marx, have found acceptance here. There are moments in intellectual or industrial development when men's minds become seeding-grounds for ideas blown from without. There were centuries when the mystical ideas of the Christian East were sown and rooted in the barbarian brains of the West. There were the years when the liberal ideas of the French Revolution were blown across Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries. And much that we call radical in America is simply foreign seed, growing vigorously in our soil, but not yet acclimated, as it is growing also in Russia and New Zea-

land. And much is not American in any sense, but rather the purely alien ideas of immigrants —individual men among us. It is not for nothing that Trotzky was here, and the Marxists, the syndicalists, the nihilists, and the communists of half Europe. We have been exposed to every germ of radicalism ever hatched in the Old World; yet neither the young professor, lecturing on the redistribution of wealth, nor the Russian stevedore, who in lower New York awaits the proletariate revolution, truly represents American radicalism. These are the ideas and these the men our restless youth are borrowing from, but they are not yet, they may never be, American.

It is fortunately not yet difficult to separate foreign from indigenous radicalism. There is that in both our heredity and our environment which makes the American mind bad soil for the seed of foreign ideologies. They rain upon us, they germinate; but they do not make a crop. We are too self-reliant, too concrete;

our New World has kept us too cheerfully busy; the heavens of opportunity have leaned too low over this blessed America for discontent which leads to dreaming, oppression which makes revolt, to be common among us. We "old Americans," at least of this generation, are poor material for Bolshevism; even as socialists we are never more than half convinced. Our radicalism has been of a different breed.

Indeed, radicalism, like religion and seawater, takes color from the atmosphere in which it is found. The French radical possesses the lucidity and the self-regarding spirit of the modern French mind. He lends ideas, but does not propagate them. The English radical seeks his ends by direct political action in good English fashion. And the native American has his own way also. That its essential quality of radicalism has often been overlooked, while the term has been bandied among soapbox orators and devotees of the

bomb, is natural, but unfortunate for clear thinking.

Our home-bred radicalism has been physical and moral, not intellectual. It has been a genuine attempt to tear down and rebuild, but it has not ordinarily been called radicalism, which term has been usually applied to radical thinking, to the intellectual radicalism of revolutionary organizations and protestants against the social order. Our effective radicals have been the leaders, not the opponents, of American society. They have been business men, philanthropists, educators, not strike-leaders, social workers, and philosophers.

I talked recently to the head of a great manufacturing plant where technical skill both of hand and of brain was exercised upon wood and brass and steel. The modern world, according to his viewing (which was very obviously from the angle of business) is divided into two categories, executives and engineers.

Executives are the men who organize and control. They are the ones chiefly rewarded. Engineers invent and carry out. They are the experts. It is the executives who lead; the experts supply ideas, work out methods, but follow.

This statement may be disputable, and it is certainly a painfully narrow bed in which to tuck American life and American ideals. Nevertheless, it has at least one element of profound truth. In the world of physical endeavor and physical organization it is executive business men who have changed, broken up, reorganized, developed the material world of America. They have fearlessly scrapped the whole machinery of production, transportation, and trade as it existed in the last generation, and in many respects improved upon, or destroyed by competition, the parallel order in the Old World. They have been true radicals of the physical category, and their achievements have been as truly radicalism as the ex-

periments of Lenine in government ownership. That it is a physical radicalism, dealing with material values chiefly and without reference to some of the greatest needs of the human spirit, does not mean that intellect of a high, if not the highest, order may not have been required for its successful accomplishment.

Our other native radicals, the philanthropists and the educators, have also been chiefly executives. Their work has been inspired by the stored-up moral force of America, especially puritan America. But their great achievements, like those of the business men, have been in organization and development rather than in thought.

In earlier generations our moral radicals were such men as Emerson and Whitman. To-day they are college presidents, organizers of junior high-school systems, or heads of the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations—prime movers all of them in systems of educational or philanthropic practice that uplift

millions at a turn of a jack-screw. And these men in any true sense of the word are radicals—so radical in their thoroughgoing attempts to transform society by making it more intelligent, healthier, more productive that all Europe is protesting or imitating them. Who is exercising a greater pressure for durable change upon the largest number, who is digging most strenuously about the roots of the old order, John Rockefeller, Jr. and his co-workers or Trotzky? It is not easy to say.

This essay is not propaganda, and I am not particularly concerned as to whether or no the reader accepts my broadening of the term "radicalism." Time may force him to do so, for no one can tell in a given age just what actions and what theories will lead to the tearing up of old institutions and the planting of a new order. Those absolutist kings, Philip Augustus and his successors, who crushed together the provinces of France, were, we see now, radicals, though power and privilege were

their motives. I, however, am interested in men rather than in categories, and the philanthropist radicals, the business radicals, and the educational pioneers of America already interest the world strangely.

What they are in essence is of course more important than the name we give them. And first of all I believe that in a genuine, if narrow, sense they have been idealistic; indeed, that their American idealism has made them radical. If America at present is actively, practically idealistic (something Europe and the world in general would like to have determined) it is due to them.

Idealism is not a negative virtue. It is not mysticism. It is not meditation, though it may be its fruit. Whatever idealism may be in philosophical definition, in life it is the desire and the attempt to put into practice conceptions of what ought theoretically to be accomplished in this imperfect world; and the quality of the

idealism depends upon the quality of the idealist.

In this sense—a true sense for America, however inapplicable to the Middle Ages—who can doubt that such Americans as I have described are idealistic? Nowhere in the world are there more visible evidences of the desires of men wreaking themselves upon earth and stone and metal, upon customs and government and morals, than in this new continent. And these desires are predominantly for betterment, for perfection—a low perfection sometimes, it is true—for the "uplift," physically, morally, intellectually of humanity.

Of course the quality of American idealism is mixed. Beside the pure ambition of a St. Francis to make men brothers, beside the aspiring hope of the cathedral builders to make faith lovely to the eye, the ideal of a chain of five-and-ten cent stores, or a railroad system, or even a democratic method of education, is not

a luminous, not a spiritual, idealism. But a working ideal for the benefit of the race it may be, and often is.

The truth of this has not seemed obvious to Europeans or to most Americans. Our individualism has been so intense and often so self-seeking, our preoccupation since the Civil War so dominantly with matter rather than with mind or spirit, that it is easy for foreigners to call us mere money-grubbers. Yet no one who has ever talked with a "captain of industry" or the director of a great philanthropic enterprise feels doubt as to the unsoundness of this description. Unfair, narrow, material-minded we may have been, but our enterprises have had vision behind them, dreams, perhaps, imposed upon us by the circumstances of a new, raw, continent, by wealth for the seeking, by opportunities for the making, by vast battles with nature to be organized and won.

Furthermore, behind and beneath all our striving, sets of moral ideas have been active.

America has never been blasé or cynical. We have never relinquished the ethics of puritanism, which are the ethics of the Bible. Even the greedy capitalist has disgorged at last, and devoted his winnings to the improvement of the society he preyed upon. But most American capitalists have not been greedy. They themselves have been devoured by a consuming desire to accomplish, to build up, to put through. When they have broken laws, it is because the laws have held them back from what seemed to them necessary, inevitable development for the greater good of all—because, in a word, they were radical.

One night in war-time, at a base port in Scotland far from our own environment and our native prejudices, I heard the self-told tale of an arch-enemy of American "interests," a pugnacious man who had fought and won, with a price on his head, sent millionaires to jail, been calumniated, been trapped by infamous conspiracies, and escaped them—a man better

hated, better loved than is the fortune of most of us. My other companion was another American, a young, but celebrated, preacher, a moralist of the breed of the Beechers and the Spurgeons. And the same question rose to our lips when the story was finished. These enemies, these magnates who had been jailed and defeated, and yet still fought and often successfully, were they mere self-seekers, rascals, by any fair definition? And neither of us was satisfied with that answer, nor was the hero of the story. Two of us at least agreed that it was rather a case of "enterprise" *versus* "social justice," of individualistic effort *versus* the rights of a community. The zeal of the capitalists had burned in their hearts until they broke through morality in an effort to make good.

But of course most of our American radicals have not been even illegal in their idealism. Their zeal has encountered only obstinacy, stupidity, and the intractable conservatism of ordi-

nary life. These men have built up great industries that made life more facile, or extended great educational and health enterprises over States and beyond seas, with little harm to any man and much good to most, unless the source of the wealth expended be questioned, or the effect of a zealot's ideas enforced upon millions.

Indeed, if strength of purpose, if energy, if a burning desire to change, to better the minds, the bodies, or the tools of men, were all that could be asked of radicalism, then we might well rest content with the achievements of the American idealist-radical. But more has been asked of the reformer, even of the reformer of business methods, than energy and will. The radicalism I have described, based upon common sense and inspired by restless virility, has not always been adequate. The pioneering days are ended when a good shot could always get game, a strong arm always find plowlands. It is time to take thought. And if one com-

pares the uprooting energy of Americans with the intellectual radicalism of Europe or with the new radicalism of the incoming American generation, a curious difference appears. Our old radicalism was perhaps healthier, certainly more productive of immediate betterment to those who profited by it; but it is harder to define, harder to follow into a probable future, because, when all is said, it is relatively aimless.

Where do our vast business enterprises lead? Toward a greater production of this world's goods, toward an accumulation of wealth in the hands of the sturdy organizers; but equally toward a vast corporate machine in which the individual man becomes a particle lost in the mass, toward a society which produces wealth without learning to distribute or employ it for the purposes of civilization. I do not say that this latter port is our destination. I say that our business leaders are steering a course which is just as likely to land us there as any-

where. Or, rather, they are stoking the engines and letting the rudder go free.

And is our vast educational enterprise any more definitely aimed? Perhaps so, for the increase of intelligence is an end in itself. Nevertheless, for what, let us say, is the American high school preparing, a new social order, or the stabilization of the old one? When the aristocrats and the burghers of Europe began to be educated, they tore themselves apart in furious wars over religion. When the Western proletariate becomes educated, will it not tear our social fabric in class wars also? Are we educating for this or against it? For what kind of society are we educating? The socialist has his answer. Can American school boards say?

And our organized philanthropists, combating hookworm, tuberculosis, lynching, child labor, liquor, slums, and preventable crime? The medieval church, hampered by its lack of

science and the waywardness of its world, engaged in such a struggle, and from a thousand monasteries, built, like our modern foundations, upon the profits of exploitation, strove to uplift Europe. Its aim and end were clear: to practise charity that the souls of workers and donors might be saved; to clothe the naked and feed the hungry that love might be felt to govern the world. And the church succeeded in its measure until, on the somewhat specious plea that not love, but justice, was demanded, rapacious governments seized the capital of the ecclesiastical corporations and sold the abbeys for building stone and lead.

Our great organizations are more efficient than the church, because they are more scientific. Whether they are more successful depends upon one's estimate of success. The modern man, for whom they care, is a cleaner, brighter, more long-lived person than his medieval ancestor. He is probably better material for civilization, because, if more vulgar-

ized, he is more intelligent. That he is happier is not so certain. The church inspired a confidence (not always justified) in the friendliness of destiny which the Rockefeller Foundation has so far failed to equal. Nevertheless, scientific philanthropy, though it promises less, achieves what it does promise more thoroughly and without those terrible by-products of the ecclesiastical system—servility, pauperism, bigotry, and superstition. But what is its aim?

With little more regard to the source of their wealth than the church, the philanthropies of to-day have far less regard for the final results of their benefactions. As with the educators, it is enough for them, so to speak, to improve the breed. The apparent philosophy behind their program is that when the proletariate is bathed, educated, and made healthy, it will be civilized, and therefore competent to take over the world (including universities and steel mills, railroads and hospitals) and run it. But the executives of these great organizations

would probably protest against this reading of their expectations almost as quickly as the donors of the funds; certainly they show no readiness to meet the proletariate half-way on its upward path. Clearly, you cannot wash, teach, and invigorate society without powerfully affecting the whole social fabric. The feeble experiments of the nineteenth century in universal education have already proved that. Some transformation the great endowments of our age are laboring to bring about. For the creating of a new race they have a plan, but not for its salvation, even on this side of heaven. Indeed, as the German experience shows, they may even become instruments by which the common man is made a mere tool firmly grasped by the hand of authority. Common sense alone governs them. Their vision is bent upon the immediate, not the ultimate, future.

A little vague these criticisms may seem to the practical mind; and vague, when philo-

sophically considered, are the aims of American radicalism. Very different, indeed, they are from the clean-cut programs of the European radical. There is little vagueness in socialism, little vagueness in syndicalism, the very opposite of vagueness, despite the efforts of the American press, in Bolshevism. In all these systems the past is condemned, the present reconstructed, and the future made visible with a lucidity that betrays their origin in efforts of the pure reason. That, of course, is the difficulty—at least to American and most British intelligences. The aim of Bolshevism is so definite as to be almost mathematical. Society as a whole is considered economically, and a program deduced that will fill the most mouths with the least labor. To be sure, stomach-filling is not the sole purpose of Lenine and his followers. They argue, and with more right than our easy-going bourgeois civilization is willing to concede, that idleness, unrest, and crime are more often the result than the cause

of poverty. Nevertheless, the type radical of the European variety does unquestionably rest his case upon the premise that man is merely a tool-using animal. Ask a Bolshevik where civilization is going, and he will answer you with ease and explicitness. Ask the average American, and he will either reply in vague platitudes or deny both knowledge and responsibility. Of the two men he is less likely to be wrong.

And note well that our domesticated socialists and intelligentzia, though far more inclined to consider the human factor than the Bolsheviki, have the same advantage of clarity of aim, and the same tendency to confuse ideas with facts. Common sense—not the highest virtue, not the virtue which will save our souls, or even our bodies, in a crisis like war or a turmoil of the spirit—is often lacking in the socialist. Good humor—again not a quality that wins heaven's gates, but a saving grace, nevertheless—is noticeably absent from the

columns of our radical weeklies. An admirable service they are rendering in clarifying the American mind, in forcing it, or some of it, to face issues, to think things through, to be intelligent as well as sensible; but the logical rigidity of their program inhibits that sense of proportion which recognizes the *Falstaffs* and the *Micawbers* of this world, smiles sometimes over miscarriages of idealism, sympathizes with feeble, humorous man, does not always scold.

And yet the American who dislikes scolding should beware of superciliousness. It is much easier for genial folks to chide the critics with programs than to be critical of themselves. The normal American is a product of American education, with its insistence upon liberal progress, upon acceleration toward the vaguest of goals. It has not taught him to be critical of others in any thorough-going fashion, it has not taught him to be critical of himself. The confidence that has carried our business to a

maximum, that has flung our schools broadcast, and swept our philanthropies over the world, spelled differently is self-assurance. Nothing disturbs us so much as to be told to stop and think. Nothing angers the business world so much as legislation that "halts business." Nothing infuriates an educational organizer more than to question the quality, not the quantity, of his product. We have seen clearly what we wished to do with iron and coal and food. We have felt, in education and philanthropy, sure of our moral bases. Our energy has been concentrated on going ahead. To be radical intellectually, to think it all out in terms of a possible relation of labor and capital, of a possible education, of a possible society for the future—that has not appealed to us. We have shunned philosophical programs by instinct, and wilfully built for to-day instead of tomorrow. The American radical has done too little thinking; the European, perhaps too much.

But the infection of thought is spreading. I do not believe that the youths who will make the coming generation—the youths that fought the war—are going to be radicals in the sense that I have called European. If the ideas of Marx and Lenine ever take root in America, it will be because social injustice such as we have not yet been cursed with makes a soil for them. If they take root, they transform in the growing, like foreign plants in California weather. But the new generation is not like the old. It is more sensitive to the winds of doctrine. It is less empirical, less optimistic, less self-assured.

Already one can divide into two classes the undergraduates as one finds them in American colleges. The smaller group their elders would call radical. But they are not socialists, not anarchists, not even consistently liberal. More truly, they are critics of things as they are. Their minds are restless; they are ever seeking for definitions, for solutions, for a cause to en-

roll under. They are restless under the push of common sense America that drives them into activity without explanation. They are painfully aware of the difference between their ideas and the conditions of life in modern society, and are determined to test one by the other. Their native idealism has become intellectual.

The other group is far larger, but, if less restless, is no more static. Most of its members are indifferent to the new ideas scintillating all over the world, if indeed they are not ignorant of them. Nevertheless, their faith in society as it was is curiously weak. If few of them are likely to become socialists, few also will be inspired by the physical and moral idealism of their fathers. The naïve enthusiasm of those fathers for "movements," "ideals," "progress" is not (unless I miss my guess) common among them. They are not likely to overturn America a second time in order to make great fortunes; philanthropy does not interest them;

education as a missionary endeavor does not seem to attract them. Their moral foundations are less solid than in old days; their energies less boundless; aimless endeavor for the sake of doing something is no longer a lure. Either they will find a program of their own to excite them, or stand pat upon the fortune they expect to inherit. If their future is to be narrowed to a choice between pleasure and mere productivity, why, then these men would rather run motor-cars than make them. There is a very real danger that rather than hustle for the sake of hustling, they will prefer to "lie down" on their job. And thanks to the homogeneity of the current American mind, this analysis, if it is true at all, is true of thousands.

The American radical in the future, I take it, will still be idealist, but not Bolshevik. That generalization from the needs of poverty is at the same time too material to suit his temper, which is still fundamentally moral, and too rash economically to sit with his practical common

sense. He will remain an idealist; but a sharpening of his intellect will give teeth to his idealism, and the practical common sense he will carry over from the days when his kind were pioneers in a new world will steady him. What he will want is not yet clear, except that it will certainly not be the world of Marx or the kaiser (himself in many respects a radical). What he will do I cannot venture to guess. But if one dare not prophesy, one may at least hope.

And my hope is that a principle now visibly at work among many Americans may guide him also. Principles, if they are sound, have a way of making themselves felt through the padding of mental habit and convention, like knobs in a chair-seat.

The principle I have in mind is merely this: that a man's character and the ideas upon which, so to speak, he operates must be appraised separately. Tenacity of will, honesty of spirit, tenderness of heart—such elements

of character make a man neither conservative nor radical, but they cannot be left out of political accounting.

And my hope is that the new generation is going to be forced toward such a weighing and discrimination of character and policies. Their mental padding has worn thin in wartime. The moral conventions that we have accepted almost unhesitatingly here in America no longer protect the youth with certainty from the shrewd blows of rationalism or superstition.

Therefore ideas and character are both likely to be more closely inspected in the days that are coming. The conservative minded, as in the past, will emphasize character; and as that is a much better platform to stand on than mere obstinacy or self-interest, they will presumably be better conservatives, provided that the intellectual unrest of the times forces them to think. The radicals will search for ideas that may transform the future, and if the abundance of ideas in relation to the paucity of accomplish-

ment causes them to put a higher value upon character, why, so much for the better radicalism.

No future in the history of the world has been so interesting as is the immediate future of America. Our next great political leader, who may be conservative, but is probably radical, is now in college or has but lately been graduated—unless, indeed, he has just been admitted to a labor-union. And he is studying, one hopes, the men who dealt most heavily in character, the amiable McKinley, the fiercely instinctive Roosevelt; he is studying the careers of the men who have been dominated chiefly by ideas, the moral idealist Wilson, the ruthless thinker Lenine. He is learning, one hopes, when and why each and all failed, each and all in their measure succeeded. Whether he profits, and we profit, from their experience, time alone will discover.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICAN IDEALISM

IS American idealism a virtue, a disease, or an illusion? The question cannot be answered in an essay. It is like the inquiry with which Tennyson threatened the flower in the crannied wall—what man is, and what God is? But it can be turned and twisted; it can be made ready for answering. The writer, and perhaps the reader, can seek an answer to it; and that is better than the inner feeling of many an American just now, who, weary of five years of idealistic oratory, profoundly believes that American idealism is first of all a nuisance.

Yet it was never so easy to make a case for the virtue of idealism as in retrospect of the

years 1914-18. What many have never grasped in the confusion of the times is that exactly the same idealistic prime motive made us join hearts from the first with Great Britain and France, kept us out of war for two years and a half, and brought us in on that April of 1917. There is always a complex of motives behind every war, but there is also, with few exceptions, a *primum mobile,* and with us it was the distrust, the fear, the hatred that were the reactions of our idealism against arbitrary violence. The invasion of Belgium settled our will for Belgium and her allies. Our distrust of war, especially European war, as a means by which we could bring about justice and peace, kept us out of the struggle despite clamorous, and perhaps far-sighted, minorities. Our final conviction that violence was a fire loose in the world, which must be stamped out, drove us from easy neutrality into war. And if in the last of these three stages dread of the future and the need of immediate self-defense had

their large part, they did no more than sharpen the angle of our resolve. Idealism kept us out of war, and idealism drove us into it.

The fume and spume of idealism is oratory, sermonizing, talk about morality, duty, patriotism, rights, and noble purposes. All such gushing rhetoric is no more the thing itself than foam is the ocean. But, like smoke, there is seldom much of it without cause. Men and women who were abroad in 1918 must reflect curiously on the, shall we say, wearisome prevalence of the moralistic, idealistic note in American speech and writing in contrast to its restraint and frequent absence in France and England. When an Englishman orated upon the war to stop war he was usually talking for American consumption. This does not mean that Great Britain and France were sordid, we sincere; on the contrary, it is proof of a tincture of the sentimental in our idealism, to which I shall later return. But it is additional testimony to the quantity and the popularity of

American idealism in those months. The tone of the press at that crucial time was evidence of the tone of the people that read and responded. And while many a sounding speech and impassioned editorial are now, as one reads them, a little faded, faintly absurd, like tattered war posters on a rural bill-board, yet no one can doubt the flood of patriotic idealism that created them, few will doubt that our war idealism was a virtue in 1914-1918.

It seemed a virtue then, but was it not already diseased? When we entered the war, the vast majority of Americans publicly and privately committed themselves to certain general principles, and, whatever else they fought for, believed that they were fighting for them. A square deal all around was one, the consent of the governed to their government was another, a third was the substitution, at all costs, of justice for violence in the ruling of the world. We all assented to these principles, most of us assumed them voluntarily as an

article of faith, and the average man took them as seriously as he is able to take abstractions. Peace came, the armistice, the stages of the treaty. Nothing could be clearer or more to be expected than that sometimes in spirit, often in detail, and most seriously in ultimate purpose, the treaty in scores of instances ran counter to the faiths we had accepted and made commonplaces of speech and thinking.

I am neither criticizing nor justifying the treaty and its included covenant. No one, I suppose, but a sentimental optimist could have expected a work of logical art in exact conformity with the principles and conditions of a new epoch that has scarcely begun, no one at least who had ever read history, or studied the politics of Sonnino, Clemenceau, and the Unionist party. It was bound to have inconsistencies; to reflect as many views as there were strong minds in the conference, to be experimental, to be a compromise. This is not what is astonishing; it is the attitude of the

typical American mind toward the treaty negotiations.

In the winter and spring of 1919, while the world was burning, while the principles we had shouted for were at last in actual settlement, this enormous American idealism slept, forgot its fine phrases, forgot its pledges to see the thing through, was bored because some Americans felt that it was our duty to see the thing through. We are an uncritical nation despite our occasional vehemence of criticism, but we have never been so uncritical of major issues as in 1919, when the terms of world settlement were of acute interest to all but Americans. We are an easy-going nation, but we have never been so easy-going as in 1919, when not one man in a thousand as much as read the abstract of the treaty to see whether the things he had said he fought for were safeguarded in it. The only real fire-spitting fervor struck out in this country since the armistice has been in defense of our right to let Europe stew in

her own juice, and our privilege to tell general principles to go hang. And this is an emotion almost too narrow to be attributed, even by the generous minded, to idealism.

One answers, of course, that such a decline from overheated virtue into indifferentism is only human nature at its old tricks, the collapse after the New Year's resolution, the weariness of being too good, symptoms, in short, of content with having "licked the Hun," and a desire to get back to work. And the reply is, of course this is true. But Europe is not thus functioning. There has been a striking contrast in the years since the war between British and American attitudes toward treaty negotiations. In England, exhausted by war as we never were, deep in the lassitude of rest after struggle, men and women have leaped into criticism and defense of the ideals embodied in the settlement. Peace has seemed to them as vital a battle-ground of ideas as war. By and large, the plodding mass of us who make money and

public opinion have been cold to the contest, uninterested. The press of Great Britain has fiercely attacked and fiercely defended the morale of the treaty; ours has reported it with little real criticism and little interest except where the league was concerned. Their universities have supplied men and parties to fight through the principles for which we fought; ours have been intent upon how much scholastic credit should be given returned soldiers and who should get an honorary degree. They forced an easy-going premier to stand for a victory that was more than conquest; we grudged our President the attempt to carry through in Paris what in 1917 we were all agreed upon; let our dislike of his methods outweigh our deep interest in his ends. If it had not been for the great issue of the League of Nations, which, forcing Americans to act, forced them to remember (some with difficulty) what they had believed in and what they had learned in 1917 of the dangers of selfish aloof-

ness from world problems, if it had not been for the fight over the league, the politics of 1919 would have been as local, as trivial, as wearisome, as in the year after a Presidential election. Some scholar in the next decade will place side by side the files of a New York daily in its moral-idealistic stage of 1917 and its cynical back-to-business mood of 1919; will compare the fantastic pledges never again to trade with Germany, which were circulating in 1918, with the export statistics of 1919; will marvel, and perhaps draw conclusions.

And one wonders, meeting everywhere an interest in world affairs that seems dying, a national morale that is forgetting its moral impulses, a hatred of the professional idealist, a weariness of general principles, and a cynical distrust of ideas—one wonders whether this flaming American idealism so-called was not even in 1918 flushed with disease, a virtue already dying.

Were we indeed ever really idealistic? Con-

sider the case of the ablest of our manufacturers, who, when the emotional fit was on him, proposed to increase the production of idealism until every American home should own an ideal of the latest model. He gives the order, draws the checks, and, naïvely surprised at the discovery that you cannot make ideals without understanding them, hangs up philosophy, and goes back to the motor business. Consider the case of our radical papers who fought our entrance into a war where American ideals were not properly safeguarded, and then preferred to risk a treaty without the League of Nations, to a league which, though it expressed American idealism, was not perfect by their judging. Consider the flaming desire to make the universe and one's home safe for democracy, in contrast with the current contempt for the ideals of industrial democracy. Perforce one wonders whether American idealism, healthy or diseased, is not a mere emotion, easily roused, never lasting; whether, as a val-

uable part of our national character, it is not an illusion.

So much needs to be said by way of charge and speculation in order to clear the air. If I write with some excitement, it is no more than the sight of the tumble from great-worded, great deeded 1918 to the indifferent, self-regarding, and a little cynical present may account for. Certainly in our national past idealism has not been an illusion, although it was often emotional. Nor, in sober fact, do I doubt the essential idealism of the normal American mind, especially that American mind which inherits the optimism and the liberal instincts of our forefathers. I am merely curious as to the exact nature of that idealism as it exists, and plays strange tricks, to-day. It seems to be a quality more resembling energy than a moral characteristic like virtue or vice. It seems, as one thinks over these recent manifestations, to be a blend of physical virility and nervous sensitiveness, good or bad, active or inactive, ac-

cording to the condition and environment of the patient. Stir him, and it becomes active, beneficent, altruistic. Stir him further, and it may become sentimental, with symptoms of hysteria. Relax the pressure, and it drops into desuetude. These are the habits of American idealism, and I doubt whether more can be said of them except by way of further description. But there must be some thoughts, some ideas behind to account for these vagaries. There must be reasons why Americans idealize more readily than other nations, and why, just now at least, they so easily tire of their idealizing.

Neither the scope of these pages nor my knowledge permits me to trace the history of American thinking and feeling, to say, as the historians some day must, what elements came from Europe, what modifications are due to pioneer environment, racial mixture, and centuries of unchecked material development. But tentatively, and with all modesty, one may

at least seek for light. I find that two great figures of our national youth and the ways of thinking they represented most help me to understand the strengths and the weaknesses of American idealism, help to an understanding of the phenomena of 1917–20.

The first is Jonathan Edwards, theologian of international importance, leader of the great spiritual revival of mid-eighteenth century New England, missionary to the Indians, president of Princeton, author of works so widely read that even now no farm-house garret in New England but will yield a sermon or two, a treatise on original sin, or his epochal essay on the freedom of the will.

Alas for human reputation! This tireless thinker, whose logic built up in entirety an impregnable argument worthy of Aquinas, is now chiefly remembered as a preacher of infant damnation and a thunderer of hell-fire over frightened Northampton congregations. But, as all wiser critics know, the influence of a

great mind is distinct and often different from its reputation. What it does, works on and on after death, transmuting, transforming; what it was in popular repute, soon becomes legend and supposed historical fact. Compare the reputation of Machiavelli with his achievements and influence as described in Macaulay's famous essay.

In actual achievement Edwards, whose mind was of unusual lucidity and endurance, crystallized for Americans the Calvinistic ethics of life which were the backbone of Puritan civilization. Man, by the unarguable might of God, is born with a will whose nature may be either bad or good. Henceforth his reason is free, his choice is free, within the limits that his character permits. It becomes therefore supremely important that he shall choose and reason virtuously, for there is no way to be sure that he has a good will, that he is among the "elect" except by virtuous action leading to a sense of salvation. Thus in every condition of life,

without excuse or palliation, the Christian must daily, hourly strive to *prove* that he is one of the elect of God, saved from hell-fire by the character God has given him. Good intentions count for nothing. Good works, if unaccompanied by the sense of spiritual salvation, count for nothing. God, Himself blameless, has willed sin and sinful men. It is for us to prove that we are not among the damned.

That the system is incredible most moderns now believe; that it is logical, more logical perhaps than any later attempt to justify the ways of God to man, the student must admit. My desire is naturally not to argue, but to emphasize, what can never be too much emphasized, the effect of such thinking upon the intellectual life of America. It was believed in powerfully and well understood by perhaps a majority of one formative generation. Later it was not believed in so powerfully, and it was but little understood, especially outside of New England. But a conviction of the infinite ne-

cessity of willing the right became a mental habit in American morality that persists and becomes a trait and a chief factor, as any reader may see, in so-called American idealism.

Benjamin Franklin was almost the exact contemporary of Jonathan Edwards, but he had the inestimable advantage of living longer and seeing more; two continents and two ages, in fact, were his familiars, and learned from him as well as taught him. Franklin, it is clear, was strongly influenced by that French eighteenth century which he loved, with its praise of reason and its trust in common sense. But he was even more a product of the new America. America, as Edwards and Cotton Mather saw it, was an experiment in godliness. When the Puritan scheme should have proved its efficacy by an abnormal increase in the number of earthly saints, the colonies would have served their chief end, and would, so Mather thought, decline. The hell-breathing vehemence of Edwards was chiefly due to his fear that the

scheme was failing. He was fighting a spiritual decline.

But Franklin was a member of the worldly, not the spiritual, body of America; he was a citizen of a country visibly growing in wealth and population. He looked outward, not inward; forward, not backward. Like Edwards, he hated sin; but sin for him was not sin because it was forbidden, but forbidden because it was sin. Franklin's was a practical morality, which was cut to fit life, not to compress it. His firm character and the clarity of his reason kept his morals high. His ethics were admirable, but they were based upon the principle that honesty is the best policy, not upon the fear of God. To be "reasonable" was his highest good. "So convenient it is to be a reasonable creature," he remarks whimsically, "since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do." As long as one is a Franklin, with the will to virtue, honesty, industry, and thrift that is bred from

a good inheritance, in a new and developing country, such ethics make for idealism. No one was more idealistic in his day than the practical Franklin, who wished to form a league of virtue of all nations to be governed by rules, and supported by the reason of virtuous mankind.

And here is another palpable strain of Americanism, differing from that necessity which Edwards trumpeted, but, like it, a stiffener of idealistic impulses. Here one places the love of a square deal, the desire to do what is right because it is "fair," the sense of the reasonableness of justice that freed the slaves, gave Cuba self-government, determined our policy toward the Philippines, and was horror-struck by the invasion of Belgium. It is the idealism of good common sense, and together with the mental habit of willing the right has been a main cause of American idealism.

Both of these American characteristics are operative to-day. Both are now factors and

dangerous factors in our idealism, for the strong will of the Calvinists to do right has become erratic and perverted, and the common sense of Franklin's school has degenerated. Here, as I shall endeavor to show, are two chief causes for the vagaries of the American mind in the years that ended the war.

The mental discipline which the Puritans learned from the fear of a wrathful God remained a discipline long after it had lost its theological basis, and is responsible in no small measure for the disciplined will of nineteenth-century America to succeed in material endeavors as well as in philanthropic or moral purpose. But, divorced from the belief in a speedy damnation which had given it cause, it was bound to become, and it did become, a mere mental habit, a kind of aimless necessity of being virtuous. Bolted no longer to a belief in a revengeful God who demanded virtue, loosed, like an engine from its flywheel, this ancestral sense of necessity whirled on by its

own momentum. It became will without thinking behind it, which was driven by material circumstance instead of religious belief. It became a restless energy whose aim, as a foreign observer has said, seemed to be "mere acceleration." It became unreasonable, often absurd, sometimes hysterical. I find its manifestations in the insistence that America must always be described as sweet, lovely, and virtuous in disregard of the facts, in our "boosting" of prosperity and success by proclaiming them. I find them in the determination to be good and happy and prosperous immediately and without regard to circumstance which has created the American magazine story and brought about national prohibition by constitutional amendment. This hand-me-down will is responsible for much progress, good and bad, in America; it is also responsible for American sentimentalism. It has been a driving force in our idealism; but because it is not so much reasoned purpose as a mental habit inherited, it has run

wild, become hysterical and erratic. It led us to propose to reform the world and to advertise our intention before our brains were ready for the task. It makes our idealism feverish and uncertain.

As for Franklin's rule of common sense, it has become a positive deterrent to idealism. His idea of conduct reasonably shaped according to the needs of environment was, and is to-day, the most solid trait of Americans. It is the ethics of modern business, and American business has become, and for a little while yet will remain, the fundamental America. Nevertheless, every candid observer will admit, no matter how great his faith in the future of his country, that the reasonable good sense of the Franklin tradition suffered a progressive dilution or degeneration throughout the nineteenth century. Rational ethics became for the most of us materialistic rationalism, still reasonable, still ethical in its way, still backed and restrained by common sense (our profiteers have

also been philanthropists), but an enemy, nevertheless, to all idealism that could not be made from steel, brick, rubber, or oil. We have been too reasonable to be sordid; too materialistic to remain in the best sense reasonable. Far from advocating a league of the virtues, our business common sense has been fighting a League of Nations. The contrast between our moral code and our business code has already been overwritten in muck-raking literature. Nevertheless, despite exaggeration, it exists. Our national life is dual. We can stand on our moral foot and our business foot, but usually we alternate. In 1918 we rested entirely on one; in 1919 we swung with relief to the other. Franklin's rule of common sense as a stimulus to idealism has broken down.

What reasonable sense of proportion I myself possess as a descendant of the compatriots of Franklin urges me to protest instantly that all this is not to be taken as a picture of contemporary America. Rather it is a plucking

out merely of two strains of experience that all must recognize. But these are perilously interwoven in our national character. They affect the validity of our idealism.

The hysterical will drives us into professions of virtue we cannot make good. It drove us to "boost" the war; and then, being a restless energy sprung from habit rather than from conviction, left us exhausted in spirit and cynical in mind when the moral profits were ready for the gathering. It stirred a passion for the League of Nations, rights of small countries, democracy, justice, and the rest, and then collapsed like the second day of "clean-up" week. It set the will going and left the brain unmoved.

And our common sense, diluted through millions, obsessed by the problems of manufacture and construction, is in ever greater danger of losing that basis of character and enlightened reason that alone can make common sense anything but common. It dreads ideas, distrusts theories, is made uncomfortable by altruism

that extends beyond the home. As a nation, we have not degenerated, for our virile energy, our will, our adaptiveness are all as strong as ever, stronger perhaps than elsewhere in the world. But, as compared with Franklin's, our common sense has lost character. It pulled back in the great moral and intellectual problems of the war; it did not lead. As manifested in the present struggle over international policies, it falls below the ethical standards of the nation, whether you tap it in clubs and offices or in Congress. In a time of crisis it rallies to encounter material problems and is invaluable; but morally and intellectually its vision is short, its endurance weak.

The trouble with the American reformer, as has often been said, is that he has more energy than reason; and this is because he incarnates the instinctive, irrational will of which I have been writing. The trouble with the American materialist is that he has kept his common sense while losing his vision.

Both, in short, lack an adequate spiritual and moral basis; and so does the American idealism that is functioning nobly, but so irregularly, to-day. With an irresponsible will driving it forward and a matter-of-fact common sense holding it back, it suffers too frequently from the weakness of all qualities that spring from custom rather than from conviction. Its leafage has spread; its roots have contracted.

I am not so unhumorous as to propose that the remedy is once again to believe in Jonathan Edwards's God and infant damnation; but we must go deeper than habit and tradition for the springs of our action. Not since the Civil War have we as a nation explored our souls, sought the channels of our being, tested our ultimate faith. This war has been no test. Its issues were clear. They appealed to principles that we held firmly because we had inherited them. It was easier to go in than to stay out. Even our material prosperity, apparently, stood to gain, not to lose, by entering the con-

flict. We made the right choice, but it was not hard to make it. To be idealistic was easy.

I do not believe that our inheritance either of virtuous will or of practical common sense will serve us long without renewal. The first is vehement in propaganda, prohibition, and hysteric excess, but flags when a load of stern duty, national or international, is put upon it. The second has no end and aim but the making of a prosperous America where the grubber and the grabber have much and others little. It is useful, nay, indispensable, to the economic state, but beyond economics—and so much is beyond economics!—there is little health in it. If our idealism is to remain as robust as our material prosperity, it must gain what Franklin would have described as a basis of enlightened reason, or suffer what Edwards would have called a conversion—and, preferably, both.

Samuel's mother was a fine, but somewhat rigorous, woman who brought him up in the conviction that he had to do right (by which

she meant being honest and moral, and going to church on Sundays) or shame would come upon him. His father was a man whose "word was as good as his bond." He taught his boy that working hard and saving money were probably the most important things in life, and that if you paid your bills, were true to your word, and kept an eye upon shifty neighbors, you were sure to be happy and successful.

At the age of fifty the father died from hardening of the arteries, the result of too few vacations, and the mother became a rather morose member of the W. C. T. U. Samuel found himself now possessed of half a million dollars and a prosperous shoe factory.

As for the factory, he discovered within a year that since the death of his father its success had been due to a new system of piece work, which "speeded up" the worker and gave the profits to the proprietor. But there seemed no way of changing the system without ruining the business. As for his wealth, it brought

him new and pleasing associates who were more polished and intelligent than he, and whose life was so much more cheerful, instructive, and interesting than his early experience that he could only wish to be like them; especially when he saw that they were far better citizens than his father, who, to tell the truth, lived very much for his own narrow interests. And yet their ideas of pleasure and even of morality were quite different from what he had been led to suppose were the only proper principles on which to conduct one's life, and they never went to church. He wanted to be honest, he wanted to be good; but neither how to be honest in his factory nor how to be good and yet a "good fellow" were explained by the teachings of his youth.

For an unhappy year or two he tried to act like his father, believe as his mother, and be like his neighbors. In addition, in order to satisfy a somewhat uneasy conscience, he prepared to enter politics on a platform of straight

Americanism and the full dinner-pail. Then in one eventful week his workmen struck for an eight-hour day and shop committees, his mother announced her intention of bequeathing her share of the estate to the Anti-tobacco League, his best girl refused to marry him unless he should become an Episcopalian, and he was invited by the local boss to subscribe to a "slush" fund or give up politics.

Samuel went to the Maine woods to catch trout and think over the situation. What he did finally is not told in the story. What he decided is, however, of some significance. For, brooding over a dark pool in the spruces, he concluded that each generation must search out the foundations for its own morality, and determine for itself the worth and power of the ideals it proclaims. And so perhaps will America.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION IN AMERICA

THE rarest experience in America is a discussion of morals. You can hear morals preached about, but that is not a discussion. You can read about morals in arguments disguised as essays, but these seldom cause discussion. Fully a third of successful American plays and stories turn upon a moral axiom, but one that we accept without argument, like rain in April and the August drouth. One hears very little real discussion of moral questions here because "old Americans," at least, agree in their moral standards as remarkably as did the Victorians.

In this respect we are, indeed, still Victorians, hough in others already a century beyond them. Some of us may (or did) get drunk, but we

do not believe in hard drinking; not even the saloon-keepers believed in hard drinking. Some of us make license of our liberty in sex relations; but the public disapproval of promiscuity is, to fall into the current phrase, nation wide. Some of us steal in a large and generous fashion, taking from him who hath not business ability for the benefit of him who hath shrewdness and its fruits. But if these actions can be described in terms of theft or misappropriation, every one will agree that they are wicked, even stock-holders and profiteers. You cannot get up a decent argument on moral questions in America, because, as with small boys in wartime, no one will take the unpopular side. The ethics of America are as definite as a code.

This accepted and not unlofty moral code, with its extension to justice and the rights of individuals, is the force behind our idealism that has made it an international factor to be reckoned with from the days of Jeffersonian ideology to our own. Like the dissenters'

vote in England, it is a dangerous force to oppose. Despite occasional hysteria and sentimentalism, despite its frequent betrayals by an unlovely common sense, it is strong because it has the momentum of tradition and the tenacity of prejudice. Of its worth I am American enough to be convinced. Of its intelligence one cannot be so certain. But what really concerns all lovers of our hard-built civilization is how durable under stress is this moral idealism, under such stress as the approaching change in our social order is sure to bring to morals and morale, as well as to railroad stocks and the Constitution.

Indeed, the inner fire, the spirit, is not easily discoverable in this American idealism with its moral causes. Historically, it is easy to explain it; habit has carried it on, and common sense must usually approve a moral investment that has been profitable; but, nevertheless, it is hard to see a continuing *raison d'être* for such idealism in America. It seems, as I have sug-

gested in an earlier chapter, to lack a definable spiritual basis. Its persistence, its weaknesses, its dangers, raise constantly the question as to the status of religion in America.

I remember hearing Graham Wallas—who will not be suspected of bias in this matter—remark that England would not pass out of clouds and darkness until she had made for herself a new and felt interpretation of religion. America, founded by a curious partnership of the religious instinct and economic need and brought up on the moral and material profits of the union, cannot be supposed to be less in need of a fundamental spiritual readjustment. Every socialist and communist, every corporation president and ex-Secretary, every professional intellectual and amateur prophet, is declaring his mind on the one thing needful to save the world and America. I do not know why we, whose profession it is to teach, whose duty it is to interpret and to sympathize with every motion of the American mind, should

hesitate to speak out also in this matter. It is, I think, demonstrable that America needs religion as much as steel and automobiles, as much as a better distribution of wealth and cheaper bread and meat.

The status of religion in America has been as peculiar as the status of politics. Our religious attitudes have been profoundly affected and from early periods by the separation of church and state. Struggle against a vested institution, dissent from traditional power, conciliation with sacred authority, have been burning points in the modern history of Europe. They have made great literature in England from Shelley through Tennyson and Arnold and Swinburne. Our first battle against the tyrannical in tradition wherever found was won in the Revolution; our second, in the defeat of the Federalist party in 1800.

In those contests we were freed, perhaps too early and too easily, from the menace of the church as a function of government. Since

then we have been, and we still are, freer than the European to seek religion wherever it may be found. Our great religious literature is creative, not protestant. Woolman of the Quakers was a seeker; Emerson, in greater measure, was a seeker, seeking spirituality for Americans, and, like Woolman, fanning their moral enthusiasms. Hawthorne and Thoreau were searchers for a new morality; Whitman and William James, in their fashion, searchers also.

Emerson in his religious attitude belongs a century later than Matthew Arnold. Fed from almost identical intellectual sources, he is the liberated mind seeking new allegiances, Arnold, the rebel not yet free. And in general American religion, without reference to its quality, has had, like American politics, a status some generations ahead of the rest of the world. Hamilton and Jefferson and Lincoln were prophets for Europe. The independent sects of America, none established, all respectable,

and the free seekers after new truth which sprang from them, seem to have prefigured a condition that is common in a world growing democratic.

In truth, we old Americans, who with all our faults still best represent America, gained freedom of conscience at the expense of shattering the ideal of a church universal. Religion for us came in general to be a personal matter because the church, separated from the state, lost the visible authority that made it easy—or necessary—to trust to an institution the responsibility for one's soul. We felt, as was to be expected, the need of new authority, new sanctions for our religion. And we were free, freer than others, to seek and to find a religion for democracy. What has been the result?

The results in bourgeois America, which goes to the theater, wears the commonly advertised collars, sends its children to college, and keeps out of the slums and the police-court,

are clearly visible and highly significant. Four classes, interlocking, but distinct enough for definition, may be readily described; and though they do not include the recent immigrant or the fire-new sophists of radicalism, the strongest brains, the most characteristic emotions, and the best character in America belong there with the mass of the mediocre undistinguished who are public opinion and the ultimate America.

There are, first, the militant advance-guards of our idealism, the ethical enthusiasts who carry on the moral fervor of America. They range, like colors of the spectrum, from the rarer violet of the philosophical moralists, inheritors of the New England ethics or the Virginia ideology, through the solid blue of the organizers of great movements in social reform, to the blatant red of the prohibitionists and the Anti-tobacco League. I do not mean to be flippant. The irony, if there is irony, is bred of the sardonic humor aroused by so various an army all certain that by stopping

this and beginning that the world can be saved.

It is their certainty that makes them impressive—the same certainty which drove our colonials toward republican government and our pioneers to the conquest of a wilderness. Sneers at their banner, "Progress," satisfy none but the reactionary. Progress where? Who knows. Progress for whom? It is hard to tell. But only the man who honestly believes in civilization for the benefit of the few can doubt the advance that has been made. I should have preferred the twelfth century to the twentieth if I could have lived in the right Benedictine monastery or been count in Provence. I should have enjoyed the Elizabethan age more than my own if I could have voyaged—in the cabin—with Raleigh, been Shakespeare's patron, or possessed a manor neither too near nor too far from London. I still think that life in a good English college, with a taste for letters and the proper port, is superior to any mental or physical luxury

we can offer in America. Yet all this is aside from the point. Provençal poetry and perfect social intercourse, high adventure, the intellectual life in an appropriate physical setting, and even good port, may come again somewhere on the line along which our progress is marching. In the meantime, though the war has been a cooling card to optimism, the ethical enthusiasms of the age have made the opportunities of the average man for most good things in life better, have made him, in the most accurate sense of the word, not nobler, but more civilized, and particularly in America, where the fire of opportunity was first set burning.

The moral enthusiasts whose religion has been transformed into ethical idealism are safe from ridicule. Religious persecution, slavery, the tyranny of disease and ignorance, they have already reformed out of the brighter parts of the world, and perhaps alcoholism and poverty are to follow. We can well afford to risk their mistakes and their excesses, their blind trust in

works, so long as they are propelled by a sincere energy of will to make the world better. But what lies behind this will? What keeps it from decaying? For these men are seldom religious in the sense that their reforming zeal springs from a deep spiritual need. A part of their energy is moral habit; a part is exactly identical with the energy that builds up a great industrial plant in order to satisfy a craving for laudable action. If the certainty that the community must be bettered, can be bettered, should slacken, where would it find revival? In faith, hope, and charity? But can hope endure and charity be permanent without faith? And what is their faith?

The faith of our moral idealists is as strong, I suppose, as that which supported the Stoics or the clear-sighted reformers of the eighteenth century. They believe in the perfectability of man and the pragmatic value of right-doing. This, for a strong man, may be enough; but it is not a religion. It is questionable whether

it would stand adversity. It was not shaken in the war, but it is shaking now. If the enthusiasm of the reformers should be spent or exhausted, they would have little to fall back upon. Their idealism has already shown signs of hysteria, spots of sentimentalism, evidences of a basis in habit and impulse as much as in deep spiritual conviction.

It has become almost a commonplace to say that the spiritual seekers, the second of our observable classes—more numerous, I believe, in America than elsewhere in the white world since the seventeenth century—are products of reaction against the dry moral will that seeks its satisfaction in works, not faith. Yet their importance has not always been grasped. Commercial America has not only been the home of the greatest of modern philanthropies, but also the source of the only powerful religious sect created in the nineteenth century, as well as one of the few new strains in idealistic philosophy. They are not happy in our

commercialism or content with ethical reform, those more sensitive spirits whose numbers and weight in bourgeois America are evident whenever an emotional crisis arrives. And the freedom from ecclesiastical restraint which was won for them by their ancestors has left them free to construct new religions.

But as it was the earnestness of the moral enthusiasts that seemed more valuable than any reason they had for goodness, so it is the spiritual craving of American seekers that is more impressive than anything they have found. I do not undervalue the hopeful idealism of Emerson or the strong protest of the Christian Scientists against surrender to petty worry and pain. Yet in so far as we may generalize in so vast a matter, the seekers of spirituality have been singularly out of harmony with the needs of a democracy. They have found religions that solace the optimistic temperament when it has been duly intellectualized; they have found medicine for the ills

of prosperous people; but the breadth and often the depth of appeal that must characterize a religion for all men they have missed or failed to seek. The Friends, later called Quakers, began with the will that all the world should become Friends; it was only in later stages that they regarded themselves as a peculiar people with whom only those fitted by temperament should join. But it is with such an exclusiveness that the seekers of to-day who promulgate religion commence. One can prophesy in advance who will or will not be Christian Scientists. And beyond the bounds of sects the spiritual adventure exhausts itself in emotional vagaries, or rises into regions of pure mysticism where, no matter how noble or how satisfying it may be for individual persons, we shall never find the religion for a democracy.

The third group is again a result of that early freeing of America from ecclesiastical control; but its members are those whom such

unchartered freedom tires. The reactionaries, if I may call them by that name without offense intended, are the lovers of tradition, whose modern craving for the sanctions of religion leads them back into dependence upon the old rites, the old theologies, the old authority, which many, indeed, never have left. They, in our history, are the Federalists of religion.

And, like the seekers, they, also, have put restrictions of temperament upon their faith. For many Americans of the old stock the breach with authority made by the Reformation is permanent. They could not go back without an intellectual debasement that would be degradation, not humility. For many others the scientific revolution of the nineteenth century has still further unfitted minds for harmony with the forms and pressures of the ecclesiastical past. Sheer scientific materialism as an explanation of God and the universe has broken down. The need for religion emerges from the controversy more palpitating than before.

Nevertheless, the science of theology has suffered from the science of inductive research. Tradition carries many a man to the door of past beauty, decorum, and harmonious faith, and he longs to enter. But his way is barred. He leans upon and loves the past. He cannot enter it. The traditionalist, to give him a better and more lovely name, has been a bringer of joy to many; but, like the seeker, his help has been partial only. He is a chaplain attendant upon the regiments of his own faith.

But by far the most significant product of our precocious religiosity in America and our early emancipation from ecclesiastical control has been indifferentism—that American indifferentism which has been easy because of our willingness to be responsible for our own evils, wide-spread because of our necessary obsession with material development, defensible in our century of good luck and the easy optimism that accompanies it.

Here lies the group by all odds the largest,

and certainly worthy of the most anxious study. Here belongs the mass of everyday Americans upon whom rests the outcome of the immediate future. What lies beneath the seeming religious indifference of the American who is not ritualist, reformer, or seeker for spiritual consolation, who is, in short, the average American of office, mill, and law-court? That is the crux of the problem.

Indifferentism, of course, is the fashion of the age, and fashions are always delusive. In a Pullman smoker, watching the faces that, like a day of south wind in July, are soggy, unillumined, one despairs of one's America. The human product of too much selling and buying has never been attractive; our half-education and the semi-intelligence that accompanies it have but defined the ill features, like careful breeding of pig or goat. It was a novel principle of primitive Christianity that lowliness and poverty might hide the noblest soul. If you followed these men home, saw their minds

freed from the pressure of competition and out of the atmosphere of distrust, would your opinion alter? Are their religious instincts hidden by the mask of American commercialism, inactive merely because suppressed by custom and fashion? Are they lying fallow? Or are they like seed too long dormant and decaying?

If only we knew by what ingenious statistics these men might be classified, prophecy would not be difficult. If only we knew how many have become mere traffickers in bodily comfort, sensualists in fact, whatever they may be in name. If only we knew how many in their hearts were dumb seekers for some spiritual satisfactions that would raise the heart in adversity, lift the mind above the necessity for safety, pleasure, success, so that all might be pursued, all enjoyed, without flatness and disillusion. But no answer is ready; for there has been no test of the latent religion of America.

It is true that in the mass of American in-

differentism the suppressed religious instinct exhibits itself by queer shoots of emotional enthusiasm for high things whether in war or in peace. It shows itself, or rather its suppression, by unexpected sentimentalism in hard places. It touches with melancholy many a typical American face in which one would expect to find self-satisfaction or arrogance. We struggle with our religious emotions in youth, suppress them in the middle years; in old age, deep buried like a hidden disease, they torment us. Old age is proverbially restless in America.

Nevertheless, the test that will reveal how much religion is latent in our democracy has not come yet; nor have our moral enthusiasms, our spiritual adventures, our reachings for tradition, been in our day really tested for the spirit behind them. There is reason to believe that the time is approaching. In a normal evolution of the bourgeois society that has made America, some clear revelation must have come

of the religious spirit that as a race and a nation we are developing. Doubtless we would slowly have found our way to an expression more true to our nature than any of the partial modes so far allowed us. But there will be no normal, or at least no slow, evolution in the religious emotions of the old Americans. A factor from without, a sudden emergency, calls for an immediate reckoning of our spiritual assets. All, in every class, who are responsible for the American inheritance of ideals and morale and character are challenged, but especially the indifferents. Those neutrals in the conflict between spirit and matter can stay neutral no longer.

Bourgeois America, which means most of America, is, as every one sees, on the verge of a revolution like the political-social revolution of 1800. For a century we have pursued economics, and now economics is pursuing us. A new class is coming to the front, and yet that, perhaps, is of minor importance in America,

where money and a little education extinguish distinctions between classes in two decades. What is coming with more significance is a new social system, wherein a new control of industry and a more equitable distribution of the products thereof is to be substituted for competitive individualism. Many are skeptical of the proposed practices by which this revolution is to be accomplished; few now doubt that its theory is correct and will some day be demonstrated.

But there has never been a revolution of any kind in world history that did not bring with it a revolution of all that tradition had established and custom made familiar. And this revolution, peaceful or otherwise, that is upon us differs from earlier examples in that its economic nature is clearly distinguished and, therefore, its challenge to all that we term esthetic, cultural, spiritual, religious, doubly sharp and direct. Food, clothing, and recreation, not religious or political liberty, are its legitimate, but

also its only expressed, objects. If it gains these at the expense of the soul—of what we all understand by the soul in the ancient warning, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—if it gains material welfare and material welfare only, it will fail; and if it fails, we all go down with it.

In western Europe, one guesses, the struggle between a socialism always threatening to become purely materialistic and our own imperfect order will be differently conducted. There, and, especially in France and Great Britain, church organizations are powerful politically, socially, and in their grip upon the popular imagination. They will sharpen the conflict and confuse the issues, making the struggle seem to resemble many earlier combats between church and anti-church. But in bourgeois America no such easy and fallacious division will be possible. Here the question as to whether the new order is to satisfy the re-

ligious and moral, as well as the economic, needs of society will rest squarely upon the individual person. No church can speak for America, for no church ever has held or ever can hold Americans together. The responsibility here, and ultimately in Europe, must be personal. It will come to the question of how much religion is possessed by the normal American. When he is aroused by a struggle that sweeps into far wider questions than the tariff or the income tax, when his method of working, his method of living, his method of thinking, are all challenged by a new and militant social order, more dormant idealism, more latent cynicisms, intenser passions, will be aroused than one would ever have suspected in that shrewd and easy-going face in the Pullman smoker. Will religion be aroused also?

It is essential that we should bring about a better distribution of wealth; that we should give every child the equal opportunity that Jefferson had in mind when he wrote the vague,

but magnificent, phrases of the Declaration of Independence. Democracy cannot be said to have been tried until we have made an economic democracy, and we are too far on the road of democratic experiment to stop half-way. But it is even more essential that we should carry on into the new community our moral enthusiasm, our ideals, and also that reverence for the shaping power, and love for its manifestations that lie behind them, and constitute the religious emotion which I shall not here attempt otherwise to define. Many fear that the nice taste, the trained mind, which have been borne upon the crest of civilization, will go down in the welter of indistinguishable breakers. There is little danger of this, since already it is the intellectuals who direct, and will direct, the new movement; and the professional man stands to gain as much as the laborer by a peaceful revolution. But in a socialistic world, built on the recovery of the unearned increment, standardized by wages, whose *raison*

d'être is the distribution of wealth, it is the religious instinct, with all that its free development implies for democracy, that is in the gravest danger. If we all become relatively rich—and this is an idea of the earthly paradise that socialism undoubtedly encourages—how many will crawl through the eye of the needle?

The labor party is not immediately responsible for the saving or the freeing of the religious instinct. Its first objectives are the comforts and material opportunities of civilization; and until these are reached we have no right to expect religious leadership from the proletariat. If any one is responsible, it is the old American, the bourgeois American. He has inherited the spiritual tradition of his ancestors; he has profited by emancipation from superstition and institutional tyranny; he has lived in a comfortable world with opportunities to illumine the spirit by literature and the arts and education. He is not going to be crushed or driven out of his inheritance; there are too

many of him, and he too closely resembles in everything but habit of life the proletariat that is rising. Upon this American rests the burden of spiritualizing as well as educating his new masters—upon the moral enthusiasts, the traditionalists, the seekers, most of all. It is such a task as the church faced in the dark ages, when barbarians had to be not only spiritualized, but civilized as well. It is a lesser task, for our new invaders are not barbarians, and their leaders are intellectually the equal of ours. Whether the outlook for success is greater, depends upon the spirit we bring to the enterprise. Our knowledge is greater; is our will that man should make more than a market of his time, sleeping and feeding, as great as the great wills of earlier centuries?

No one can answer; but of this we can be assured, that the solution rests in American indifferentism. If the commercial American is as material as he looks, if common sense is his only good, if his idealism is merely inherited

habit, if he responds to two impulses only, restlessness and sentimentality, then he will go over to socialism in its most mechanical phase and, instead of saving the new party, he will ruin it. Potentially the most ardent supporters of a purely materialistic socialism, in which the individual person counts for nothing aside from his appetites, are precisely the "practical" business men who now curse the new order most loudly because it threatens their accumulations. For them it is civil war between seekers for the dollar; and civil war is always the bitterest, and the soonest healed. Such men have been our leaders. Is the army behind them?

I think that the rank and file of bourgeois America are less concerned with wealth and the struggle for wealth than we suppose. I think that they are not so much dazzled by millions as in the 'nineties; more anxious for simplicity of heart, which spells content, and worthiness of aim, which satisfies conscience, than one would guess from Wall Street or Broadway or

public life in the Middle West. I think that, while distrusting the economic paradise of the more material socialists, they are closer in sympathy to a thoughtful laborer than to a cynical capitalist. If the religious instinct among them emerges as a disgust for petty emotions, as a passionate interest in humanity, as a willingness to sacrifice privilege and prejudice for a fuller life more generously shared, if the religion of our democracy finds no more expression than this, the crisis will pass. If even thus far indifferentism should yield to active spiritual faith, the bourgeoisie would cease being bourgeois, and we could cease to fear the triumph of the proletariate, since, if there was anything good in our old stock, we could convert them to it.

But if the American has lost his religious instincts, if behind his practical common sense and his vigorous idealism and his eager experiments in spirituality there is nothing but a restless energy working upon the momentum of

convictions long dead, then let the new Americans absorb us quickly, for we are worn out.

With all humbleness, with a full realization of the trivialities of hustle and bustle in which we have sunk our religion, with concern for our escape from easy-going optimism and skeptical content, I, for one, feel too sure of the depth of our racial legacy of reverence, and the fundamental religiosity of the American character at its truest, to admit for a moment that conclusion of despair.

CHAPTER VI

LITERATURE IN AMERICA

"Fix't in sublimest thought behold them rise
World after world unfolding to their eyes,
Lead, light, allure them thro' the total plan
And give new guidance to the paths of man."

THESE were the modest aspirations for American genius, and especially American literary genius, expressed by Joel Barlow, the once famous author, in his "Columbiad" of 1807.

It was not a democratic literature, as we understand the term, that Barlow, and hundreds of others on both sides of the Atlantic, hoped and expected to see arise in the new republic. It was not a literature that would interpret the homely, though vigorous, personality of a new nation. Nothing so concrete and so common-

place as this would have raised their ardor to such a pitch. The excitable critics of that day were concerned with the absolute, the ideal, and the abstract. Liberty, not equality, had at last found a dwelling-place, and the free spirit of man was to expand in an illimitable continent as never before, and create the poetry of freedom and the epic of liberated mankind. But their vast expectations were based upon a misconception and surrounded by fallacies. They have not been realized; and this is one reason for the prevailing idea that literary America has been a disappointment, that the life of the mind in America has lagged behind its opportunities, that we are a backward race in literature and the arts. We seem children to-day beside the dreams of our ancestors.

It is easy enough to see now that a race which had to construct a nation in a continent in large part scarcely habitable was not ready to sing the epic of freedom. Freedom had been won, but

whether it would be possible to possess and enjoy it depended not upon lyrical interpretation, but upon statecraft, the broadax, toil, transportation, and the rifle. And when the pioneering days were over, political freedom, freedom of conscience and the individual man, belonged as truly to other great nations who were equally entitled to create the literature of the free mind. To expect the ideals of liberty to appear in American literature was legitimate, but to look for a great poetic outburst in nineteenth-century America just because this republic first established a new political order was no more reasonable than to demand a new style in architecture from the erectors of the first capitol in the trans-Alleghany wilderness.

What should have been asked of us, at least after the defeat of the Federalist party had made certain, what before was only probable, that America would become a democracy, was a literature which should express the ideals pervading our particular brand of democratic life,

a literature which should describe a society in which social distinctions were elastic, opportunity was superabundant, and, for the first time in the modern world, the common people become more powerful than the uncommon. A democratic literature could rightly have been expected from America. But such a literature would never have been termed "sublimest thought" by our early enthusiasts. It would have to suffer from the tawdriness of the masses, and develop as slowly as they develop. It would have to be more prose than poetry, for American life outwardly was prosaic except upon its borders, and often gross and barbarous there. It would have to struggle upward like a flapping heron, not soar like the eagle of our dreams. And in the earlier period, perhaps in most periods of the republic, few literary dreamers even wished that America should become a democracy.

In many respects we got, and got very soon, such a literature, and much of it has endured.

The prose or poetry that took upon itself to let the eagle scream for liberty has quite generally gone into oblivion, and with reason; it is either crude and blatant, or solemn and hackneyed pretentiousness, like Barlow's "Columbiad" and much of Dwight's "Conquest of Canaan." The "less enraptured" strains of Irving and Hawthorne and Clemens and Holmes and Bret Harte, in which the hopes, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies, and the passions of a nascent civilization were expressed in prose as well as poetry, and in humor more frequently than in epic grandeur, have had a thousand times more virility. They have sprung from a social and esthetic need, not a romantic conception, and though not an epoch-making celebration of freedom finally brought to earth, they have been a solid contribution to the literature of the world and a beginning of the literature of the American democracy.

The real issue of course was not Freedom and Liberty and the other capitalizations of the

abstract, but we, the Americans. And the real question is whether American literature has met its proper, not its assumed, specifications. If one considers the past, the answer inclines toward the affirmative.

There have been two chief strains in American literature, not always distinct, but in origin different. In the first belong those writers whose dominant purpose has been to appeal to the best in the many; and by the best I mean the finest or the deepest emotions, and by the many I mean the accessible minds of the democracy. Emerson belongs primarily here, and Hawthorne, and, though he would have denied it, Whitman. Henry James in his earlier stories is a lovable example; and when he pursued his magical art into realms where only the trained appreciation could follow, Mrs. Wharton put on the mantle. In the second have been the more numerous writers whose chief purpose, not always a conscious one, has been to touch and interest and

arouse not so much the best as the commonest, the most universal emotions. Cooper is the most excellent example of great writing in this group. Mark Twain when not misanthropic, Bret Harte in all moods, Whittier and Longfellow, Riley and O. Henry, and a host of the less distinguished, also belong there.

But far more important than this division in purpose, which, after all, is hard to make and harder still to keep, is the fact, if one may speak of high esthetic matters in a biological fashion, of constant cross-fertilization between these strains, and especially in the men we call great. Americans who felt impelled to write of the ideal best have not forgotten the needs of a nation slowly moving toward democracy. Those who wrote to amuse and interest the populace have felt in a curious fashion their responsibility for what they considered American ideals. Tribute has been paid by both sides, though each in its own fashion, to democracy; and this makes an unexpected congruity be-

tween appeals to the best and satisfactions for the many, between Emerson and popular fiction. The scholar presents his idealistic optimism as an attempt to explain where the eager swarm ought to be winging. The story-teller, though inspired not by ideas, but by the chance to interest an energetic society absorbed in the conquest of nature and hot-blooded with the taste of success, yet feels bound to urge what he feels to be American morality and American idealism.

This common sympathy with democracy is the hope of American literature in the sharp tests of our nationality now almost upon us. Emerson and Cooper, Hawthorne and Mark Twain, are examples of what once it could do.

Emerson was a man who never courted or obtained popularity, who hitched his readers to a star instead of a plot or a sensation, who wrote always for minds that may have been democratic, but certainly could not have been common. Cooper, like Shakespeare, was an

aristocrat in tastes, a democrat by sympathy and conviction, whose stories, even his bad stories, contained that essential adventure, that rapid and unexpected and successful action, which satisfies the universal craving for struggle well ended, stories so popular that his enemies were entranced by them even while they abused him.

The contrast is sharp. And yet, if the greatness of Emerson is the airy strength of his ideology, his permanence in the history of American civilization is determined by the expression he gave to the moral optimism of the typical American. And if the popularity of Cooper was due to the unflagging interest of his adventure and the romance of his actors and his scenes, nevertheless what makes him more than a good story-teller and gives him great place in the social history of America is his incarnation of the ideals and the morality of a native democracy in Deerslayer, whom all Americans could understand and admire.

Or consider Hawthorne and Mark Twain. Hawthorne was a moralist romancer whose austere talents forced admiration and a somewhat doubtful popularity. Twain touched the universal note of humorous exaggeration so early and so readily that his stern moral basis went unremarked. Men read him for humor as they read Cooper for romance, absorbing the ideas of each as unconsciously as the child takes medicine in a sugared glass.

Nevertheless, if in Hawthorne the burden of lofty moral ideals is more evident than any appeal to the masses, yet the most careless reader feels that his warnings are for a new world that has broken with tradition and must face its problems of sin and sex in a democracy of conscience. And if Mark Twain writes obviously to amuse the democracy, yet he seldom fails to preach to them also. "Huckleberry Finn," to the loving, thoughtful reader, is among other things an epic of the injustice, the inconsistency of sophisticated man and his social system, seen

through the eyes of the new world on the Mississippi, where tradition, in the fresh, crude light, showed its seams of decay. There is a tract upon slavery in "Huckleberry Finn," and another upon dueling, and a third on social distinctions, and a fourth upon conventionalized religion. And readers of Clemens will not forget how the bones of his acrid philosophy wore through the skin of his humor in those later books, especially in "The Mysterious Stranger," where a hatred of social injustice and the melancholy foreboding which has always accompanied the optimism of American democracy had such full escape that the publishers were led to print it as a fairytale for children that it might be enjoyed by minds too unobservant to trouble with its warnings.

I do not wish to seem to be docketing all American literature in these brief comparisons. What I desire is to point to this common interest of our writers in the needs of democracy. Whitman, who wrote always for

the most vigorous and sometimes for the best emotions of the many, might continue the argument. Howells, whose zest for the familiar experience kept his penetrating intellect busy with problems important for democracy, is another example. Poe, and Henry James in his later years, fall without both groups, being as indifferent to democracy as they are solicitous for art. That is their distinction. Indeed, it is by such men that the writers who sway the masses are trained in the technique of their craft.

In short, by and large, our literature is remarkable for its substructure of what might be called democratic idealism—idealism applied to the needs of a growing democracy. If the reader doubts, let him compare Emerson with Carlyle, Cooper with Scott, Hawthorne with Tennyson, Whitman with Browning, and answer whether our writers have not been formed by the social needs of America.

That this is true of so many men, and has

led to the cross-fertilization between popular writers and intellectuals of which I have written above, is perhaps more readily explained when one considers how homogeneous our society has been, how few and how slight its mental cleavages. Conservative and radical, traditionalist and anti-traditionalist, democrat and aristocrat—such clefts have not gone so deep with us as with other nations. Except for times of stress, as in the decade between 1765 and 1775, or in the years just before the Civil War, it would be hard to group, for example, our writers by fundamental differences in their philosophy of living. Whitman one could classify, and Poe and Irving, but the difficulty rapidly increases as the list lengthens. We have been homogeneous by a common tradition of liberalism, by a common environment varying not too greatly between Boston and the newer West. And our literature has resembled us.

And now, when at last our literature, like our

politics and our economics, must at last challenge world scrutiny, this national character, and all that represents it, has come suddenly to seem of vast importance. We have become vividly aware of it, and we realize that we are in dire need of self-expression—of self-expression by new literature. The self-consciousness of Americans throughout the nineteenth century, which showed itself keenly in their restlessness under foreign criticism and their irrepressible desire to talk about God's country, was of a different kind. It was due to a nervous uncertainty as to the success of the American experiment. We were more concerned with what others thought of our qualities than with what we were or had been. But three things have altered our situation radically, and made us think more of character and less of reputation.

The first is the absolute success, as success is measured by the world's finger, of this American experiment. The hope of the founders to

establish a stable and prosperous republican government where life, property, conscience, and opinion were safe has been realized.

The second and more sensational change came from the Great War, which gave us that quiet confidence in our national strength that comes when recognition from without confirms the fact and makes self-assertion unnecessary.

The third, and probably the most important, has been the rise to intellectual influence and cultural and social power of aliens—Irish, German, most of all Jews—who, unlike the earlier immigrants, do not cherish as their chief wish the desire to become in every sense American. Such phenomena as an Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Paine, becoming almost from the day of their landing more native than the natives, are becoming rarer and rarer. More and more we must count upon cosmopolitans of brains and ability among us who know not Israel, though they may love the traditions of their home lands even less. It is this new

America, heterogeneous, brilliant, useful, but disturbing, that has more than anything else sharpened the self-consciousness of America, turned us toward introspection, made us sensible of our homogeneity, and the new alignments inevitable for the future.

And just as at the turn of the eighteenth century enthusiasts were clamoring for a new literature from America, in which freedom and liberty should have their apotheosis, so now the awakened consciousness of Americans of the older stock is clamoring for the expression of what they vaguely denominate, and still more vaguely describe, as Americanism. Like all such terms called forth by a crisis and displayed like a flag or a button, the term is at the same time indefinite and full of significance. Ten men and women will in ten different ways define it. And yet none can doubt that vast feeling lies behind the word, and would crystallize, if power were given it, into an expression of our national experience and aspirations and ideals

as we have lived with them and seen them develop for a century.

And opposed to this clamor for a literature of Americanism is another call, not loud yet, but rising—a demand for a different literature, mordant, sophisticated, cosmopolitan, which will cut at the sentimentalities in which our idealism has involved us, strike at the moribund liberalism which we still regard as our basis of action, take issue with the moral standards that have been received as irrevocable because they were American. Keenly aware of the need for a more honest and more vigorous expression of what America means to-day, and sensitive to these caustic attacks upon all that we have called American, the thoughtful mind finds little to console it in the clever, sentimental writing which, with sewing-machines, dental pastes, ready-made clothes, and cheap motor-cars, has become one of the standarized products of America.

There has been one response already to the

awakening national consciousness, and this, curiously enough, has been almost identical with the reaction of the new republic a century and more ago to its responsibilities. Then the first writing which commanded attention here and abroad was to be found in so-called state papers, declarations of Congress and legislatures, pamphlets by Adams and Hamilton and Jefferson. And the first response to our modern clamor for Americanism has also been in state papers, beginning perhaps with Roosevelt's administration and continuing through Wilson's messages and the many documents on the war. The worth and significance of many of these public utterances have commanded world-wide respect, and possible permanence in literature.

Yet it is rarely that state papers can satisfy a national need for literature. They are too restricted in their interests and too occasional in their provenance. It is only once in a century that a Gettysburg Address sums up the

political and moral philosophy of millions or a discourse on the needs and obligations of democracy unites public opinion in America and Europe. The emotions of the race seek outlet and interpretation in pure literature, and here the American response is more doubtful.

None of the more popular brands of contemporary writing seems to satisfy the craving for national self-expression. It is true that we are going in for universals. Our books reach the hundred thousands, and our magazines the millions. The successful writer of plays, stories, or special articles trades in the thoughts that circulate through a vast community of common education, experience, and environment. The result is to spread and perpetuate the ideals and the liberal hopes that we call American, but also to stereotype and thus weaken their influence. They become counters in a game, or, better still, standardized foods for the imagination, whose popularity is certain until the fashion wears out. The writer of ad-

venturous fiction to-day uses the same formulas as did Cooper, because he writes for a people still true to the mold of that America which they have inherited directly in family life, or indirectly in the schools. But his idealism is faint beside Cooper's; his "strong, simple Americans" too often mere fabrications when compared with Deerslayer, or crude, vulgarized approximations, like sculptures of the decadent fourth century. Vulgarization is the menace of democratic literature—vulgarization by smart and cheap short stories, by plays where the wit is raw, the sentiment mushy, the characters, like their language, cheap and mean. Slang can be racy; colloquialism belongs to a literature of the people; to be homely is often to be lovable and true: but a literature, no matter how moral, which in its lack of clarity and sweetness is like a glass of dirty water, is a heavy price to pay for mere circulation. The appeal to universals is essential in a democracy, but unless clarified by love and hope and con-

viction, it leads toward universal vulgarity.

Nor does the prospect cheer if one looks to the contemporary Brahmins, who seek not the universal, but the particular; who write for the best, not the broadest, emotions of democracy. Lowells and Emersons have not yet reappeared in our society. No Emerson has philosophized the reactions of America to international obligation; no Lowell assailed militarist and pacifist alike in the war; no Whitman even has sung commonplace America become momentarily heroic in the cause of a half-understood democracy. We have had an abundance of writing directed to fine minds and fine souls, but it has lacked the authentic note of national inspiration.

Perhaps the coldness of our intellectual literature has been due to the specialization of the age. A Lowell, an Emerson, even a Longfellow, has been difficult for the last three decades. Learned men, like these, have been driven by the public opinion of their world

toward investigation and scientific research. They have been weighted with a frightful responsibility for facts; they have been better scholars than their predecessors, but less effective citizens. The tool-cutter nowadays knows only his own operation. The scholar and philosopher have a lifetime of labor assigned them, with no time to become acquainted with their United States. In nineteenth-century America there was little place for the scholar. He was driven into the world, and if scholarship lost, we profited. Now his corner is built for him, and he has gone into it.

As a result of all this we face a very real danger. American literature, with its burden of ideals and experience, being cheapened by writers for the mob and deserted by the academician, may lose its virility and pale before a new literature of cosmopolitanism, which could find no better breeding-place than Chicago or New York.

Artistically, this might be no calamity.

Such a society as a great American city presents has never before been seen in the world, not even in Rome, and the international democracy which it forecasts is worthy already of a great literature, has, indeed, already begun one. But we old Americans, even though our age is of only two generations, are not yet ready for international democracy. Our own racial character has not received its final stamp, come to full self-expression, established itself as the permanent influence upon the world's development which our career and our opportunities should make it. To rush into literary internationalism before the long American experience has ripened into a national democracy would be to skip a step. It is to commit again the error of our forefathers, who proposed an epic of liberty before we had freed ourselves from the burden of economic development.

And what we need is precisely such a cross-fertilization between the mind that reaches for the best and the imagination which feels for

the many, as one finds in varying measures in Mark Twain and Holmes, in Cooper and Whitman and Emerson. It must be a different and perhaps a more mature product, but nothing else can make American ideals worth saving in literature, for nothing else can grasp the shrewd native quality of this people, which is still pervasive through all our alien swarms.

For three centuries now we have been at our experiment in democracy. We have been sordid and we have been magnificent. We have been timorous and we have set examples for hardihood in man. We have stumbled blindly on our road, and we have had great moments of illumination. We have not made a perfect democracy, but perhaps more men, women, and children have been happy in America than elsewhere in world history. And on the whole our course has been consistently onward. No purpose of the founders has fai'ed to continue; no valuable element of character has yet been lost by the way. We are no

worse men, by and large, than our forefathers. And either this great experiment is worth something or it is not.

If it is worth something, it must pass into literature, and find men to make it pass. And these men and women must be lovers of what we have done here and what we are, as the young poets of England at war were above all lovers of their blessed England. They cannot be scoffers at our loose-held ideals and our nervous commercialism, who scold, which is easy, a great, though uneven, nation, but do not search out the cause of its greatness and proclaim its hope. Nor can they be recluses contemptuous of that public in whose progressive refinement lies the only chance for democracy. Nor mere buyers and sellers of emotion who have learned the speech of the great beast, as Hamilton called the common people, only to make profit by it.

But you cannot summon a literature from the vasty deep by calling for it in oratorical

vein. Perhaps, even now as I write, some wise youth, who takes his task more seriously than himself, has begun in humor a poem that is meant for some newspaper column, but will become a better description than an essay can give of the American who has been doing so much, but thinking also, who still knows how to grin at misfortune, and is not yet ready to declare himself bankrupt in ideas, deficient in character, or pallid in imaginative faith. As a nation we did our boasting early and got it out of our system; but the confidence and the strength and the hope that inspired that boasting remain, and approach fruition.

CHAPTER VII

THE BOURGEOIS AMERICAN

IN the preceding chapters there has been much said of conservatism and radicalism, of idealism and the religious instinct, of literature that expresses the soul of a race. Nevertheless, when we look about in this our America, it is painfully clear that not these absolutes but man who makes and possesses them must chiefly concern us. It is the American who will make or break his religion, his literature, his politics. He is the entity. He is our destiny.

And therefore one comes back after a survey of American traits, their strengths, and their weaknesses, to the man himself. Can we name him in this hive of millions? Can we find an everyday American that will be accepted here as typical, and be recognized abroad? If there

is such a type, it will be among the middle class, the bourgeois Americans, that we shall discover it. The landholding aristocracy has passed. The moneyed aristocracy is in the best (and sometimes in the worst) sense bourgeois. Cosmopolitans are few. The intellectual aristocracy is but half emerged, like a statue of Rodin's, from the common clay.

What we find now is the middle class incarnate. What we may expect soon is the finished product of bourgeois life in America. For it is clear that this life is now in full career. We exult in it, and its characteristic virtues. We deprecate aristocracy. We heap scorn upon the proletariat and persecute its prophets. Better evidence still, no sooner does a new group rise to security in our social system than it becomes visibly bourgeois, and, what is more important, mentally bourgeois. This has been true of the railway employees, the carpenters, the plumbers, the tenant farmers, and many others. It has been also true of the "aristoc-

racy" in the old sense of the word, whether native or European. They have come into the fold, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes at a run with poverty barking behind them. All these groups have been captured by the dominant class. And if the nature of our industrial system still keeps them in alignment against the capitalist (who is the soul of bourgeoisie) or dependent upon him, nevertheless they think as he does on all questions not involving work and wages, and especially in religion, politics, and morality. They act as he does; and the labor groups are coming to fight as he does, and for the same ends.

All major influences in our American life seem to be directed toward this consummation, which is triumphant, or dismal, according to your point of view. The racial factor may seem to be an exception, but is not. It is true that as the old American assimilates more and more non-Teutonic and non-Latin races to his way of living, his psychology alters, and his

habits are likely to follow. It is also true that the immigrant belongs prevailingly to the peasantry or the proletariat. But the immigrant has substantially no influence upon the dominant class until he is Americanized. And he is not Americanized in any true sense until he leaves his quarter and begins to read the papers, go to the theatres, eat the food, talk the talk, and think the thoughts of the American; in a word, until he becomes bourgeois. And in the majority of cases this takes at least one generation.

Economic conditions, on the other hand, favor this triumph of the bourgeoisie. We seem to be entering upon a period when a vastly greater number of men and women will have reasonable security of moderate income. But security of a moderate income, which means a guaranteed mediocrity, is the mainstay, is almost the cause, of the bourgeois spirit, just as privilege was the support of the aristocracy. And if in the next generation ten times as many

families can count on a cost plus basis of living, this will but increase the middle class. It will make, to be sure, more education, more refinement, and perhaps more cerebration possible; but such a circumstance will not radically affect the character of the typical American.

Culturally, we already see the results of the many influences which are making the United States bourgeois in warp and woof. Our traits are not the fine exclusiveness, the discrimination, the selfishness of an aristocracy. Nor are they the social solidarity, the intellectual democracy, the intolerance of a proletariat. One finds rather individualism in opinion and unity in thought. One finds conservatism in institutions and radicalism in personal ambitions. One finds a solid, though dull morality, a distrust of ideas, a plentiful lack of taste, an abundance of the homely virtues of industry, truth telling, optimism, idealism, and charity, which, in an age that suits such talents, make a man healthy, wealthy, and, in his own genera-

tion, wise. Such a cultural level, and such a national character are becoming more and more familiar in America.

There must be some peak ahead; some top of the curve when the bourgeois spirit, even in the United States, will have reached the climax of its power, and the height of its vigor, and will begin to lose its sharpness of outline, and to give way to the spirit of the next age, be that what it may.

This peak is perhaps nearer than we suppose. What will happen afterwards lies in darkness, but must depend in some measure upon the temper of the bourgeoisie; and as America bids fair to be the capital of Bourgeoisia, upon the temper of America. The question may be posed this way. Are we, who are no longer the middle class, since there is no power other than spiritual or intellectual above us, are we proposing to imperialize, or to federalize the world which we dominate?

Is the bourgeois conception of security for

all, and superiority (other than economic) for none, to be forced upon the years ahead? Is our democracy, as Brooks Adams thinks, a democracy of degradation, a level to which all must be either lifted, or lowered? Will we hold back, as long as our power lasts, the proletariat, feeding them, clothing them, converting them, but suppressing them, so that we may be secure? Will we tyrannize the exceptional in art, in literature, in statesmanship, in pure thinking, freezing it by distrust, or exploiting it for sensation and reducing its fruits to vulgarity? Will we resolve religion into a social emotion and poetry to rhythmic prose? Must the poor fragments of the privileged classes that still remain, and the little shopkeepers, and the teachers with their hankerings after an intellectual aristocracy, and the skilled workman with the feverish zeal of a new convert to security still upon him—must they all unite with the industrial magnate in a holy alliance of things as they are to crush into uniformity a humanity

where only rebels against our authority and the uncivilized remain?

This would be the imperialism of the bourgeoisie. And neither our churches, which are rigidly bourgeois, nor our universities, which are ponderously bourgeois, and both trading in security, offer leadership that guarantees escape.

Or will we attempt to federalize this world that apparently we have conquered, allowing autonomy for races of ideas, nations of customs, and room enough for plantations of new desires in our fat fields? Will we tolerate fineness, encourage variety, permit heresy, prepare for change? It is said by way of compliment that here in America we have neither aristocrats nor peasants. Will we preserve, or destroy, the peasant virtues, the ideas of the aristocrat, the desires of the intellectual. Will we make possible a nation where to be average is not the highest good?

I have no answer, naturally. There is no

reply that can now be formulated. But the solution is already present in the problem itself. It is to be found in men and women, in boys and girls especially, who will belong to the new order and who will answer in their time. If you wish to speculate upon what will become of the post-bellum American, whose traits as they exist to-day have been the subject of this book, study, on the one hand, the younger leaders in the labor parties, and on the other, the college undergraduates. In them lies the future.

THE END

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